

# THE STORY OF PETERBOROUGH

by D.W. Bracey

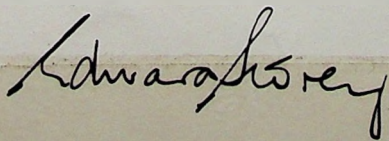
# Foreword

It is exciting to pick up an account of local history and find there a wide-ranging view, not only of a city or district, but of Man's prolonged and complex development towards civilisation. What Denis Bracey has achieved in this brief but fascinating document is the story of ordinary people building a tradition and a way of life. In the process they also built the city which we now know as Peterborough. The author has skillfully related his theme to the greater issues which have influenced our growth from prehistoric times to the present day and the result is enlightening.

A city is more than a collection of buildings, of offices, shops and civic centres. It is a place where people work, find leisure, and – regrettably now less so – live. To give that life any quality they need education, hospitals, places of worship, places of entertainment, and features of a landscape to which they can relate and thereby find an expression for their ideals. But ideals are not easily achieved and Man has often had to compromise. There have been accidents, catastrophes and wars which have frequently held up the rate of progress and, in some cases, changed the course of history entirely. If we could re-write the events of 1914-18, for instance, what a different story we would have to tell now. There have been times too when Man has lacked the vision to see how best his dreams might be realized and the mistakes made were very much ones of human error. Even so, his ability to survive, and to fashion some kind of civilized life for himself out of his many ruins, is quite considerable when seen against the absorbing chronicle of his whole existence.

Within this story of Peterborough we also have outlined for us the story of social history, political development, local government, the ebb and flow of religious influence and the intriguing patterns of change which have made us what we are today. We are taken back to the dawn of civilization and guided along a few of the important paths which have led up to our own time. What could so easily have become a boring

compilation of facts is made especially interesting by the author's use of analogy. In his section on prehistoric days he explains that if "the *Diplodocus* returned to Peterborough it could, by standing up on its hind legs, reach the top of the West Front of the Cathedral." Such an original illustration of the prehistoric monster's size gives a new dimension to our concept of it and even for a moment changes our view of the cathedral. We are reminded too of the growth of language and learn how words like *bonfire* came into our vocabulary – bonfires being once upon a time the "bone fires" on which the local townsfolk burnt the bones of animals which had been slaughtered for food. We learn also of the origin of 'drinking a toast' and how the term 'ballot-box' came to such common usage. It is timely too in these days of high-speed trains to be reminded that less than one hundred and fifty years ago it took twelve hours to travel by coach from Peterborough to London, a journey which can be made today in less than one hour. Change has more often than not meant progress and, although some cherished values disappear that has usually been for the improved quality of life. The section on the history of medicine (on which Dr. Bracey is obviously an authority) is evidence enough and reminds us again of the many benefits we have inherited. The challenge facing us is that we quickly become part of the past and whether we like it or not some future historian will also judge us and ask what we contributed to the future. We are all part of that ever-flowing stream of history, owing as much to what is to come as we do to what is already gone. This publication certainly helps us to get ourselves into perspective and gives us a sense of identity, a sense of belonging, both to a place and a time. The facts, comments and illustrations to be found on the following pages will be of enormous value to the native and the newcomer, to the resident and the traveller. It is my privilege to wish its message well and its future pleasantly long.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, which appears to read 'Edward Bracey', is written in a cursive style at the bottom right of the page.

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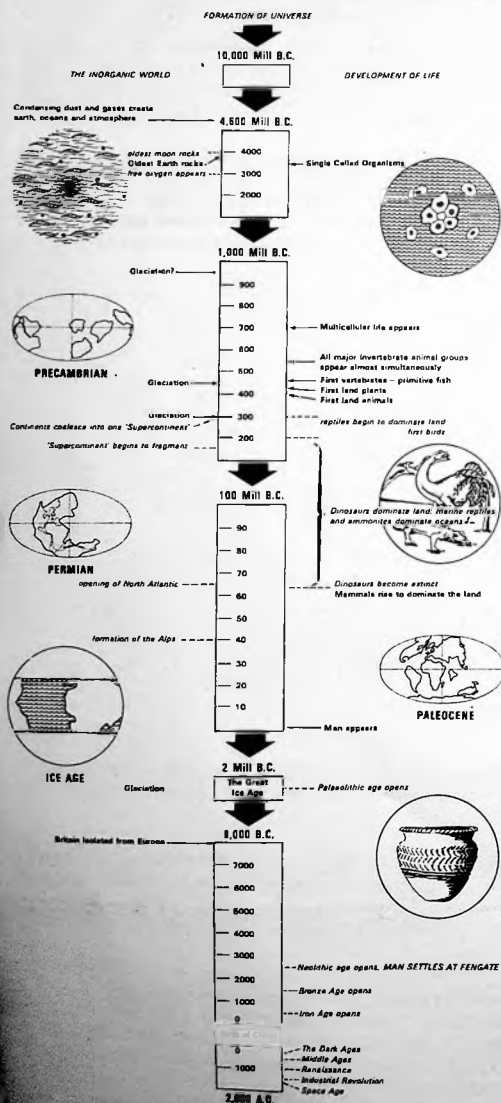
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# THE STORY OF PETERBOROUGH

## its beginning & growth



### THE STORY OF THE WORLD

Although human habitation in the Peterborough area dates back some 350,000 years before Christ, it may be interesting to briefly recount what had already happened in the world to that date and further.

It is estimated that the earth began some 4600 million years ago and it is thought that our planet revolved around the sun for about 1000 million years before the first life forms appeared in the sea. It is worthy of note that our planet is the only one apparently with water on its surface.

Whilst marine life was evolving over the next 3000 million years, it was not until 400 million years ago that small land plants and insects began their development.

300 million years ago reptiles appeared, and during the following 150 million years huge Dinosaurs roamed that part of the earth's surface which had by that time grown sufficient vegetation for their food requirements.

Thus we come to the time scale of 65 million years ago, when, it is believed, the evolution of MAN commenced. Man, a Primate, the higher order of mammals, is considered to have developed from small tree-dwelling animals who fed on insects and fruits. Over the next 60 million years these animals progressed to the stage of monkeys and then to Apes, the first mammals to become biped.

By about 2½ millions years Man had appeared, as evidenced by finds of the stone tools he made and used as well as his skeletal remains.

From 350,000 B.C. Modern man (*Homo sapiens*) was roaming the earth and hunting the wild animals which inspired him to create the paintings found in Spain and France.

During all these millions of years there had been recurring Ice Ages when, for hundreds or thousands of years at a time, ice would spread from the poles often including the British Isles, and forcing both man and animals to retreat or return to the warmer equatorial regions.

The last Ice Age finished about 10,000 B.C. and it was also at this time that these Isles separated from the Continent, thus forming the English Channel.

Much evidence has been found to support the existence of food cultivation in both the Old and New world between the years 10,000 and 4,000 B.C., including the growing of rice, barley, wheat beans, peas, avocado pears, maize and peppers.



scraper

Flints found locally



arrow heads



chisel



hand axe

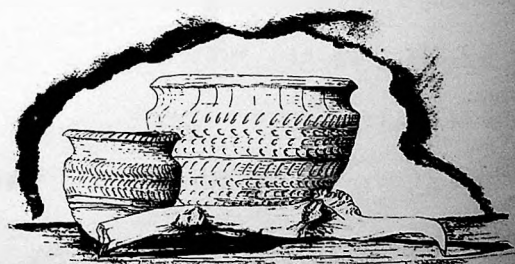
Excavations have also revealed two cities in the Middle East where a high degree of civilisation existed in a population of several thousand with a system of government, social classes and specialist crafts including those of writing and accounting. All this was at a time when our islands were still inhabited by nomadic and primitive hunters.

Jericho was one such city, north of the Dead Sea, 15 miles from Jerusalem. It was a strongly fortified city, watered by a natural spring called Elisha's fountain. It was continuously occupied for 7000 years but only covered 10 acres. The other city so far discovered was called Catal Huyuk in Southern Turkey, spread over 50 acres with mud brick huts entered through the roof, there being no doors. It is thought that this was a defence measure.

Passing down through the years we come to our city, where up to 4000 B.C. as far as we know, no humans as yet had permanently settled.

There is ample proof however of a settlement at Fengate from that date with the inhabitants relatively happy with a living from the lush Fen soil, the River Nene and the local animal and bird life.

At about 3000 B.C. the discovery of the benefit of annual crop sowing with effective use of seeds had reached this area from the Continent. The no longer haphazard yields lead to a timed harvest or reaping and of course the need for storage arose, which stimulated the art of Pottery. Saltern sites at Werrington and under the Cathedral dating back to these days indicate that the people had discovered the preservative value of salt for animal meat.



New Stone Age Pottery

These two advances meant in effect that they could stay in one place for the winter and also feed themselves and their animals, whereas before they had had to destroy the animals for lack of winter feeding material.

By 700 B.C. the Celts had crossed the Channel from Europe bringing to this country,

- 1) The Art of Iron-ore extraction and its working.
- 2) Their language, from which were to develop, Irish, Scots and Welsh.
- 3) Expansion of the political skill of grouping the people into tribes.
- 4) Last but not least, the introduction of gold, silver and later, bronze coinage, though not used as we do, for most trade was by barter.



At this time (700) a settlement was in existence between the Westwood and Spital bridges, probably near the site of Tom Lock's spring, a natural water supply which flowed to the Nene through the area of the present city. Finds from this site are in the Peterborough Museum.

Thus from the New Stone Age onwards the Peterborough area gradually developed into a well organised agricultural community.

The next major influence on our area was the invasion and conquest of Britain by the Romans in A.D. 43.

This led to the construction of the Roman town of Durobrivae, located near the village of Waternewton and protected by a



fort. A garrison of Roman troops was also stationed at Longthorpe fortress in the Nene Valley under the western end of the Thorpe Wood golf course.

This fortress provided a safe refuge for Roman commanders pursued by Queen Boadicea and her armies after the burning of Camalodunum (Colchester).

For some 400 years Britain was one of the 44 provinces of the Roman empire. In 328 A.D. Christianity had become the State religion and in 379 all worship of heathen gods was made illegal. The Christianity brought by the Romans was struggling in a pagan community, and further hindered by the invasion by the Jutes in 449 (in Kent) and the Saxons in 475 (Southern England).

The reconversion of the country to Christianity was initiated by the arrival of St. Augustine from Rome in 597. He was created the first Archbishop of Canterbury by Ethelbert King of Kent, and he introduced the Benedictine order of monks who were to build many Abbeys including the one at Peterborough.

In order to describe and date, with some semblance of accuracy, the progress of man from over two million years ago until say 700 B.C., the Danish archaeologist Christian Thomsen devised the 3-age dating system of Stone, Bronze and Iron, with Stone subdivided into Old and New. Not unnaturally further subdivisions were made later but, sticking to the four we have:

**Paleolithic** – Old Stone age with implements unpolished.

**Neolithic** – New Stone age with polished tools and weapons.

**Bronze** – The discovery of heating together of Copper and Tin to form bronze.

**Iron** – The discovery of how to extract, by heating, Iron metal from non-metallic rock or earth and the ability to shape it. This dating scheme depends on the simple assumption that man moved forward from Stone age to Bronze and then to Iron age in that order for weapons of attack and defence as well as tools for building and cultivation. There are however no firm dates which can be allocated to anyone of these ages. On average, those living in the Middle East (unhindered by the recurring Ice ages) moved more quickly through the system than people living in the north or south of the continents.

In other instances, e.g. Africa, the Bronze age was completely absent, whereas the Australian Aborigines have stayed in the paleolithic stone age till the present day.

By this scheme, tools and weapons found near excavated buildings or skeletons have enabled the particular civilisation to be approximately dated. However to complicate matters of dating, stone tools were still being made at a time when the people had in fact already advanced through to the Iron age.

The system is not therefore perfect but helpful.

## The beginnings of life on earth.

The gradual cooling of the gaseous mass spun off from the sun, 4600 million years ago, led to the condensation of at least 9 planets including the planet Earth. For the next 1000 million years little happened except the gradual formation of complex organic chemical molecules, e.g. Methane, Carbon Dioxide etc. However 3600 million years ago single cell life forms gradually appeared in the waters. Conglomeration of these into groups of cells was the next step. Over countless years the cells in those groups began to take on specialised functions including the development of a 'surface' and an 'interior'.

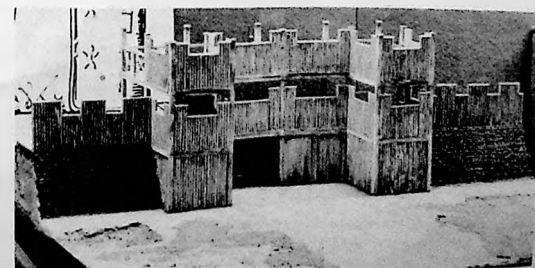
Then groups joined together to form larger masses of cells with more definitive shapes, developing not only movement but also methods for the supply of food from the water to internal cells well away from the surface. Some single cells and groups failed to evolve further and tests recently have shown that they are the same as they were millions of years ago. Unlike other planets in the solar system, the earth has water on its surface and this is a vital medium and essential carrier for all the necessities and functions of life, given of course, the appropriate range of temperature. About 400 million years ago some marine life forms began to adapt to dry land, so that very slowly, fins and gills changed to legs and lungs. Meanwhile those life forms approximate to the water's edge, e.g. seaweeds had to develop an internal transport system to carry water and essential nutrients from the soil to their interior. Their surface had to become thick, both as a protection from the elements, and to conserve water. They needed to develop a strong internal framework to take the place of the buoyancy their ancestors had had in the salt water. They formed the first land plants. At this time the Earth's land surface (only 30% of the whole) still formed one solid mass, but over a period of 150 million years this mass gradually split up into the five known continents. They are still moving apart although very very slowly.

For quite unknown reasons some forms of water and land life developed into enormous creatures.

Another mystery of evolution is the apparently sudden and dramatic disappearance of Dinosaurs and other massive land creatures such as Mammoths (part of the skeleton of a mammoth was found at Maxey recently).

The latest theory as to why, is that the earth was hit, some 65 million years ago, by a very large meteorite. The resultant dust and debris thrown up covered the land mass to such a depth that all vegetation was rendered inaccessible to large animals so that they starved, leaving only the very small forms of animal life (whose needs were much less), to survive the holocaust. The theory is based on the finding of a thin layer of Iridium at a depth below the earth's surface consistent with having been deposited at that time, and it being known that this particular element normally only exists in the atmosphere.

Some idea of the size of Dinosaurs can be imagined that if one of the largest, the Diplodocus, returned to Peterborough, it could, by standing up on its hind legs, reach the top of the West Front of the Cathedral!



North gate of the Roman fort at Longthorpe

# THE STORY OF PETERBOROUGH

ENGLISH GOVERNMENT FROM 450 to 1066 AD

During the 600 years of Saxon rule each Kingdom with its own King and court 'shired' or cut up into smaller areas for ease of judicial work, tax collection and the raising of defence forces. After 1066 they were called counties.

There were established some 40 Shires each with its 100 men led by a chief magistrate (Ealdorman) appointed by the King, and the Sheriff (also appointed) whose specific job was to organise taxation and defence by becoming overseer of the Lords of the Manors in all the large towns.

Each village would have its 'tun' moot or meeting to which twelve men were appointed to deal with village problems. Large towns would have a hundred such men whilst Burgh moots (such as Peterborough) would also have a hundred citizens appointed to the Moot court. Both Burgh and large town were entitled to send 12 men to the Shire Moot.

It was in 878 that King Alfred finally defeated the Danes but allowed them to keep Eastern England. He established the English Navy, allowed slaves to go free after seven years and encouraged the recording of English History in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle which continued for nearly 300 years - 1154 - 7 copies of which are still extant.

He formed a general assembly - The Witanagemot - wise men - a council of a hundred - including the King, Earls, Abbots and 52 Thanes (Freemen in possession of 500 acres). They met three or four times yearly - usually in London and were similar to our House of Lords.

The Witanagemot had an inner council - the Curia Regis - from which are derived our Law Courts.

In 925 King Athelstan having subdued the other Kingdoms, adopted for the first time the title 'King of England' and was crowned at Kingston upon Thames. Grandson of King Alfred he improved the laws, favoured the building of monasteries and the translation of the scriptures.

the founding of the first Abbey (Medeshamstede)



Peterborough was within the Kingdom of Mercia (Middle Angle) one of the seven Kingdoms of the Anglo-Saxons. Its King was Penda, a pagan, and it was his son - Peada - who desired marriage into the christian family of Oswid of Northumbria. This enabled a mission of four Benedictine priests to visit the area to bring about a return to Christianity. Thus the first Abbey - Medeshamstede with Saxulf as its first Abbot was founded in AD 654.

King Peada was murdered in 656 and the foundation was completed over the next 10 years by his brother King Wulfhere.

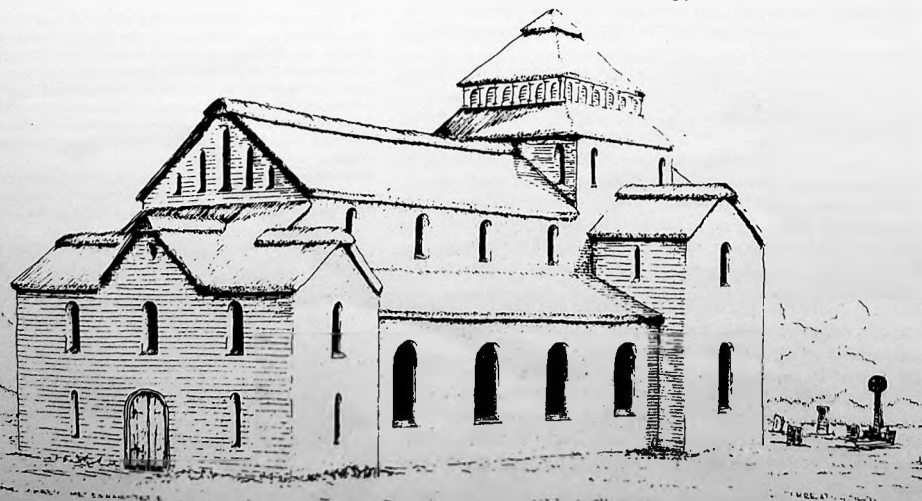
In 680 a Bull (Papal document) was issued by Pope Agatho confirming gifts on the Abbey.

Stenton (1933) relates that charters recording the first foundation are all forgeries - but probably based on some original documents.



The Hadda Stone

Two hundred years later in 870 AD the Danes (Norsemen or Vikings) invaded East Anglia, sacking the Abbey and stopping all missionary work for nearly 100 years.



Reconstruction of the first Abbey at Medeshamstede

In 966 the Bishop of Winchester re-established the Abbeys of Ely, Croyland and Medeshamstede. Rebuilding of the Abbey was completed in 972 and a Charter was then granted by King Edgar.

About 1000 AD Abbot Cenwulf built a wall around the Abbey – thus creating a Burgh (Burch or Burh and now Borough) – a fortified town with certain privileges. With the addition of the Saint's name, Medeshamstede became PETERBOROUGH.



Reconstruction of the second Abbey at Medeshamstede

As a burgh it became entitled to hold a moot court three times yearly to settle minor legal affairs of the citizens<sup>3</sup>. In addition the Abbot received authority to mint coins – one such survives, found in Sweden, a copy is in the City Museum.

Abbot Aelfsige (1005-1042) was Councillor to King Aethelraed Unraed (means ill-advised) – better known as 'the Unready' who died in 1015, and afterwards to his widow, who married Canute, King of England and Denmark. Aelfsige brought much wealth to Peterborough through his contact with Royalty. He was a collector of relics, including the bones of Kyneburgha and Cyneswitha, St. Tibba, of Ryhall and the arm of St. Oswald.

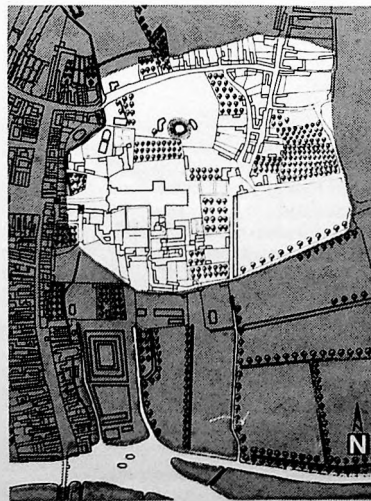
Abbot Leofric (1052)\* nephew of Lady Godiva – so enriched the Abbey that it became known as 'the Golden' to many people.

The Peterborough Penny



In 1070 with England under Norman rule we read of the Saxon, Hereward the Wake (birthplace Bourne) and friend of the Danes, occupying the Abbey in Abbot Thorold's absence at Stamford and taking many treasures from it. After this, Thorold, appointed by William the Conqueror, built the garrison – Tout Hill to protect the Abbey from further onslaught.

In 1116 – fire broke out in the Bakehouse setting light to the church and town. It is said that the Abbey tower burnt for nine whole days.



Saxon Medeshamstede

## A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF THESE DAYS

*The Saxons inherited the Roman roads, Town sites and Agriculture – whilst Heathen Gods are preserved in the days of the week – Sun – Moon – Mars – Woden – Thor – Frigg and Saturn.*

*It was the marriage of King Ethelbert of Kent to Bertha, Christian daughter of the King of the Franks which made it possible for St. Augustine with 40 monks to land at Kent in 597. Christian missionaries were Friars or Monks. Friars tended to wander singly over the land, preaching and living in complete poverty – later many became numbered amongst the first teachers at Universities e.g. Oxford. Monks lived in Monasteries.*

*The people lived in cottages of wood or clay with a thatched roof and earth floor. Some lived in stone houses, but all ate in one room – The Hall, with servants sitting below a precious ornament called the salt and they drank from a common goblet called the Wassail. In Saxon 'Wass Hael' meant – 'your good health'. The expression 'not worth his salt' did not refer to this ornament but meant 'not worth his salary or wage'.*

*They wore tunics, skirts or shorts of wool or linen and leather shoes. The men had flowing moustaches and long hair. The rich could afford silk and cotton but neither rich nor poor had the benefit of soap. They ate well of bread, cheese, fruit, meat, fish, eggs and game. They ate with their fingers, knives and forks came to the table in the early 17th century.*

*As yet there were no root crops for winter feeding so most beasts were slaughtered and salted before winter. The chief industries were stone, iron and bronze (copper and tin) and salt working. Wool was also produced. There was ale wine and mead as well as honey.*

*Outdoor activities consisted of running, wrestling, stone slinging as well as singing and dancing. They played board games (chess, backgammon and dice), raced horses and were fond of riddles and poetry. For the wealthy there was hawking, the chase and archery.*

<sup>1</sup> King – Thought to be from Cyn, meaning Father.

<sup>2</sup> Medeshamstede – The home by the deep well. There was thought to be an allegedly unfathomable point in the Nene adjacent to the Abbey.

<sup>3</sup> This legal authority wielded over quite a wide area including (Oundle and Burghley House) gave the title of 'SOKE' to Peterborough – a title once common in England but only in the case of Peterborough did it survive some 900 years – until the middle of this century.

<sup>4</sup> In 1066 Abbot Leofric was with King Harold at Hastings but fell ill and had to return to Peterborough where he died soon after. It was in 1066 when the first sighting of Halley's Comet was noted and so recorded in the Bayeux Tapestry.



# THE STORY OF PETERBOROUGH

to the dissolution of the Monastery .. 1539

## Contemporary medieval days in England

### The Feudal System

*This was introduced by William the Conqueror in 1071. Feudal is from a continental Anglo-Saxon word – Feoh – meaning cattle and property. It also, as 'fee', referred to wages and money.*

Under the system every piece of land was owned in its entirety by the King. In return for military service he gave estates to Lords, Barons and Abbots who thus became Vassals (feudal tenants) to the Sovereign. In return the Lords and others could, so to speak, sublet parcels of their land to other people. Thus every holder of land was automatically a vassal or tenant to a superior. It was Henry I (1100-1135) who first established an Exchequer in the Curia Regis or King's Council. The man in charge (Chancellor) used a chequered cloth to keep a tally on the monies received.

Out of the Feudal system arose the Age of Chivalry in which, ideally, men developed a sense of honour to the King, a loyalty to their friends, a reverence for women and a love for warlike adventure. From 1075 to 1291 seven crusades from England and Europe were made to the Holy Land against Muhammadans – most ending disastrously. It was during this time that chastity belts were designed and used. Chastity belts are still made in this country for export to the Middle East.

*It was this age too that saw the founding of Universities as institutes of learning in Britain (e. g. Oxford), Germany, France and Spain—separate from the cloister schools of the Monasteries—later to become grammar schools. Feudalism in this country was finally abolished in 1925.*

*The Magna Carta was signed by King John in 1215 – at least it was sealed by him as it is thought that he could not write. Amongst many things it established that Justice must not be denied, delayed or sold to any man, that punishment was to be proportionable to the offence and that every man should be tried by his equals. It was from this last edict that Trial by Jury started in this country.*

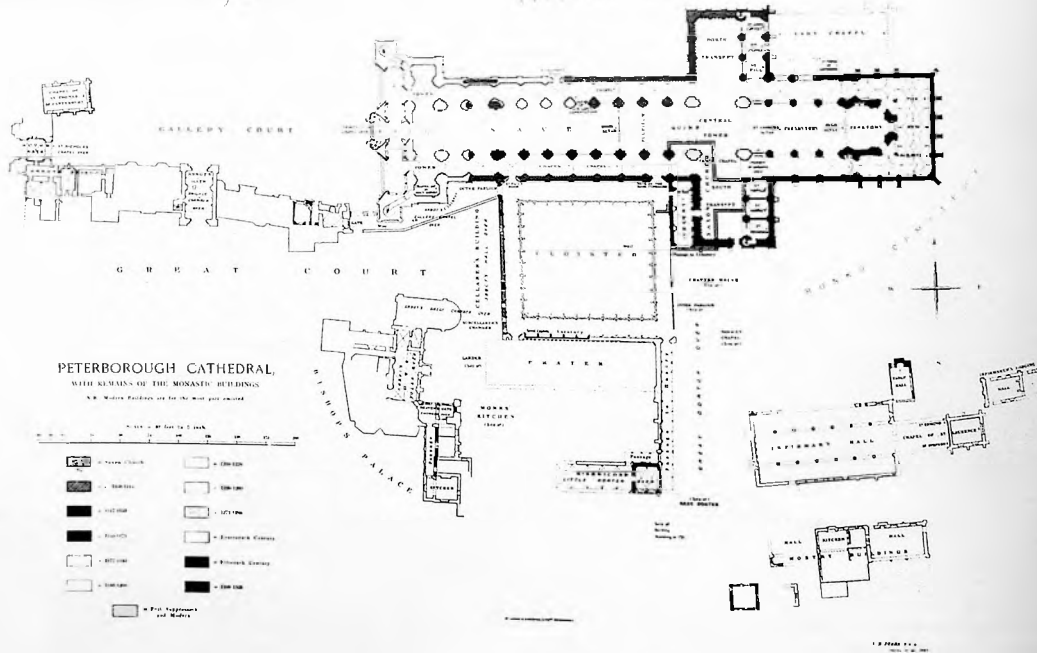
Prior to 1215 an accused person was subjected to physical trial on the basis that were he innocent no harm would come to him. This was called Trial by Ordeal. For the high ranking, as well as Trial by Combat, there would be trial by walking on fire or carrying a red hot iron – if there was no wound showing after three days he was innocent. For common folk it would be plunging the arm into boiling water – guilt was presumed if the skin was injured. Witches were bound and tossed into cold water and adjudged guilty if they floated. If they sank they were thought innocent and pulled out.

In 1118 Abbot John de Sais started the rebuilding of the Abbey at the east end. In ten years the crossing had been reached with Abbot Martin le Bec in charge. The Transept Choir and Nave were completed in another 75 years – 1193. Forty five years later the West Front was finished and in the following year – 1238, the Minster was consecrated by Bishop Grosseteste of Lincoln.

The first expansion of Peterborough was initiated by Martin le Bec, when he moved the Market from east of the Abbey, at the junction of St. John's Road and Vineyard Road (where it had been in existence for 200 years from his Charter granted in the 10th Century by King Edgar), to Cathedral Square.

The market remained on this site for well over 600 years up to the middle of this Century.

Towards the end of the 12th Century the Thomas à Becket Chapel was constructed with its nave extending into the market place (where Lloyds Bank now is).



**Limoges enamel casket said to come from Peterborough**

This nave was subsequently pulled down some 200 years later to provide stone for the rebuilding of St. John's Church just west of the present Guildhall. Its transfer from where it was first built near the old market (where Bishop Creighton school stands approximately) was completed in 1407. Apart from the Spire, removed in the 17th Century, this Parish Church remains the same substantially, as when it was built nearly 600 years ago.

To complete the first expansion various streets were established—ending with 'gate' (a Norse term for a roadway). So we have Westgate (or Webstergate).

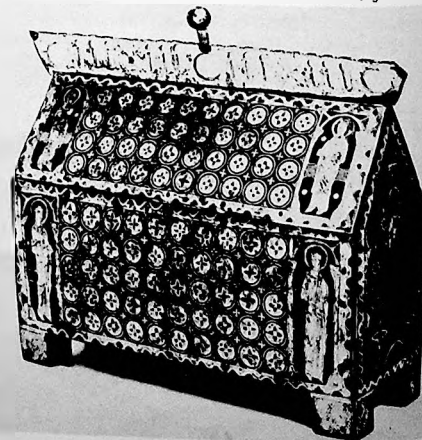
## Boon or Bondgate

## Priestgate

Howegate (City Road and Marketstede—including the Causeway).

Dwellings grouped in the vicinity of these 'gates' formed the first 'wards' for the purposes of law and order (cf).

The earliest Charter for the City is from Abbot Robert Linsey in 1215 and it records that there were:



152 Dwellings

18 Burgesses (citizens with a vote)

79 Villeins (men who gave service for landholding)

55 'Freemen' – who held land at a fixed rent – but relieved of feudal dues to the Abbot and whose daughters were allowed to marry without licence. They were likely to be Traders or Craftsmen.<sup>1</sup>

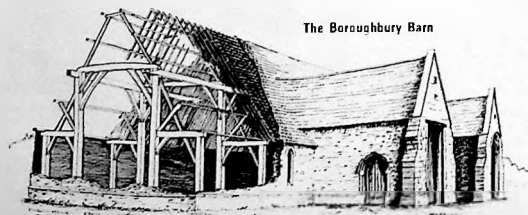
From this survey it seems that the population had doubled since the Domesday records.

Abbot Robert of Sutton founded the Grange or Home Farm – which was later extended by Abbot Godfrey (1299 – 1322) as far as the Manor of Boroughbury with its great Barn which is still in use up to 1886. The site is where the Frank Perkins Social centre now stands.

The Sacristan (or Sexton – a layman who looked after the Church and Churchyard) held his tithes<sup>2</sup> at Sexton's Barns (near the North railway station) whilst the Abbey Hospitaller received his tithes in a Barn sited where the Regional pool now stands.

There were three outbreaks of Black Death (Bubonic Plague) in England, coming from Europe between 1348 and 1379, which reduced the population. In 1381 dispirited Peterborough citizens attacked the Abbey which was only just saved by the Knights rushing down from the Knights Chamber and being helped by archers sent by the Bishop of Norwich.

The citizens revolted against Abbot Kirkton – when he tried to annex Flag Fen for his own use. Forty men armed with clubs, pitchforks, bows and arrows defended the area and moreover threatened that any citizen who did not join in their protest would lose their common rights!



The Boroughbury Barn

Abbot Kirkton again upset the town by extending his deer park as far as the present Burghley square and also eastwards to Boongate, thus encroaching on the parishioners burial ground. The case was taken to the Star Chamber – but the outcome is unknown.<sup>3</sup>

Henry VIII put Thomas Cromwell (no relation to Oliver) in charge of the visitation of all the Monasteries and on November 29th 1539 Peterborough Abbey, along with many

others was dissolved. However because the King's first wife – Katherine was buried there – he relented and allowed Peterborough to become one of the five new Foundations (the others being Gloucester, Bristol, Oxford and Chester). In 1541 Abbot John Chambers was appointed by Henry VIII the first Bishop of Peterborough with a new Diocese (Bishop's district). The Bishop took control over Boroughbury and the Soke (with 32 townships). For the next 40 years each Bishop was automatically Lord Paramount of the Liberty.



The 'New Building' built by Abbot Kirkton

1 Boys wishing to enter a Craft would have to live in the home of the Craftsman for 3-7 years and be brought up as a Christian. When the time was ripe the pupil would produce his 'piece' for approval by the Master – hence the word 'Masterpiece'. Then he was allowed to leave – set up on his own and if he wished, get married.

2 Tithes – a tenth part of produce or stock or labour (i.e. cash) given to the church (made compulsory after the 8th Century). At the time of the dissolution Henry VIII took all the available money from monasteries, but in 1704 Queen Anne set all such monies aside as a Bounty – essentially to supplement the incomes of poor clergy. The Bounty collected tithe rents right up to 1936. The Tithe Act of that year substituted Government Stock for the Bounty and the Bounty thereafter helped to form and finance the Church Commission for England.

3 Star Chamber – a room in the Palace of Westminster established by Henry VII in 1487 and with a ceiling decorated with stars. Here would meet the Kings Council (Curia Regis) reinforced by Judges and designed to check the influence of powerful Nobles. It was abolished by the Long Parliament in 1641 for its attempt to support Charles I.

## The Politico-Economic status of Peterborough in Medieval Times

Many of the Peterborough Abbots were men of note – as busy at Court as in the Abbey. Abbot Ernulf in 1108 was adviser to Henry I before the invasion and subsequent conquest of Normandy. Abbot Benedict in 1177 served as one of the Regents during the captivity of Richard Coeur de Lion in the seventh and last crusade. The other Regent was the Bishop of Ely. Abbot John of Caux in 1232 was Chancellor to Henry III and travelled all over England as a Judge.

In the reigns of Edward IV and Henry VII 1461-1509 the Abbots of Peterborough acquired authority to appoint Coroners and Justices of the Peace with a writ of Oyer and Terminer (power to hear and determine trials of offences) – duties similar to the Assize Courts of the present day. Law and Order

In 1401 records show that there were about 264 families in the City. Each main street with its alleys and yards formed a ward – 5 in all.

Each ward had its Constable (parish officer) aided by Dozeners or tithing men each responsible for the good behaviour of ten or twelve families. In addition they kept watch on the market for offences such as Forestalling (selling goods before the market opened) or Regrading (buying on the way to market and then selling later in the same market). They were also responsible for public conduct at Inns and the prevention of the playing of unlawful games such as football.

Other citizens called Afferons were appointed by the Court Leet to assess fines and look after the Stocks – located to the North side of the present Guildhall and still in use until 1819.

Equally important were the one or two Alesters who watched carefully the price and quality of Bread and Ale.

All this was put in hand at a time when there was no understanding of good or bad health and no thought given to the provisions of safe water supply or sewage disposal for any of the dwellings. Reading and writing was confined mainly to the Monks.

The Soke of Peterborough

The area of land in the Soke and under the control of the Abbots since the 10th century covered eight 'Hundreds'. An Hundred was a division of a shire and is thought to have contained one hundred hides and a hide varied from 60-100 acres (depending on land quality) but enough to feed one family for a year. Hence a Hundred contained 100 families and the Soke with its eight hundreds extended as far south as the town of Finedon beyond Thrapston and included 32 similar townships with fourteen parishes.

The City was the administrative centre of a large feudal estate the Soke – a mini-county. Other such areas were Ely and the Isle of Wight but Peterborough survived the longest.

After 1066 the Abbot was always a Royal nominee and as a Baron, had to provide 60 Knights-men at Arms for service to the King and their headquarters were in the Knights chamber over the entrance to the Bishops palace. The only weapon wielded by the Abbot or Bishop was a Mace (a club designed to wound not kill) a form of which exists to the present day and always carried before the Mayor.

In 1576 Bishop Scambler surrendered much of his estate and Judicial rights to Queen Elizabeth in hope of personal preferment. In March 1577 the Queen passed them to her Lord High Treasurer, Baron Burghley of Stamford – who thus became Lord Paramount of the Liberty. Thus established, the Soke continued as an administrative county for 387 years when it was merged into the County of Huntingdon and Peterborough.

The Dean and Chapter

After the dissolution and the establishment of Cathedral the Abbot became Bishop and the Prior became the Dean. The word Dean means head of ten and originally there were ten canons in the Chapter or Chapter house – so called because it was where a chapter of the rules of the Order would have been read each day. The Dean and Chapter became Lords of Peterborough and Longthorpe but they placed the administration of the City largely in the care of Churchwardens and later the Feoffees – a body of worthy citizens elected in a manner not now clear.

# THE STORY OF PETERBOROUGH

to the Municipal City of 1874

## The Revival of Learning

*The invention of Printing in Holland and Germany and its introduction into England by William Caxton at Westminster (1475) was the catalyst for the revival of classical learning (the Renaissance), coinciding with the period of reformation within the Church (the 'protestation' of the Augustinian monk, Martin Luther, in 1517 against the sale of indulgences by the Popes, together with the resentment of the people at the over-centralised and often tyrannical church). By 1600 northern Europe was mostly Protestant with the rest predominantly Catholic.*

*In England the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer were now printed in English.*

*The redistribution of wealth and land from the monasteries was one of the factors which enabled the wealthy to travel on the continent and introduce new Architecture, Art, Literature and Philosophy to this country.*

*Thus, after the relative backwardness of the 1000 years of medieval days (5th to the 15th centuries) English people were able to pick up the threads of scientific thought and reason, first recorded in 300 B.C. in the once famous University of Alexandria with its library of 300,000 volumes long since destroyed.*

*The 17th and 18th centuries witness the initiation and expansion of the British Empire which was to equal Europe or the whole of the Americas in size.*

*We have to remember that in these days there were no railways or telephones, it took a week to travel from London to York and the total population was only about 6 million.*

*In the middle ages the ladies revived the lost art of make-up so favoured of the Egyptians in the days of the Pharaohs. In 1650 a gentleman of Bath dropped a piece of bread into his hot mead and, catching the eye of a young lady, 'toasted' her. It quickly became the custom throughout the country but a hundred years were to pass before man drank a toast to a man!*

*Markets and Fairs were the main centres of communication and commerce. These were the years too of unsurpassed stately home building in acres of magnificently designed gardens, such as Thorpe Hall.<sup>1</sup> Some of these now form the basis of the National Trust. However, it was also the time of autocratic Kings—subservient Parliaments—rotten Boroughs<sup>2</sup>—the buying of votes and much corruption in all walks of life. The Church too was separated from the State, with intense and sometimes bitter dissension amongst the faithful.*

*William III (1694-1702) started the National Debt to pay for his wars against the French and authorised the founding of the Bank of England. In 1799 Income Tax was introduced to pay for more wars. It was dropped to its lowest in 1874 – 2d in the Pound – but earlier, in fact, it had been abolished for one year (1816).*

*Also, though sad to relate, crime, drunkenness and poverty were rife in every big town – particularly in London. Admissions to hospitals were usually to painfully die (more or less quickly) as both infection and disease were totally uncomprehended, whilst surgery called for heroism from both surgeon and patient alike, perhaps more so from the patient!*



The Sake of Peterborough

Abbot John Chambers – a native of Peterborough – was elected by Henry VIII to be the first Bishop with control of the Borough and the Soke. The Vill of Peterborough became a City with the Dean and Chapter as its Lords. The Court Leet continued to look after town affairs with the Bailiff (Town Clerk) and officials judging minor offences and the problems of Copyhold Tenants (copyhold ceased to be an entity in 1925 thus ending the last vestige of feudalism). They met twice yearly.

The Piepowder court (dusty footed or vagabond) held mainly on market days, in the vicinity of the market and dealing with petty crimes. The Court Leet met in the Moot Hall (in the Exchange Street – Cumbergate area – Moot meaning place of assembly). Next to the Moot Hall was an earlier Guildhall where Craft and Religious guilds met.

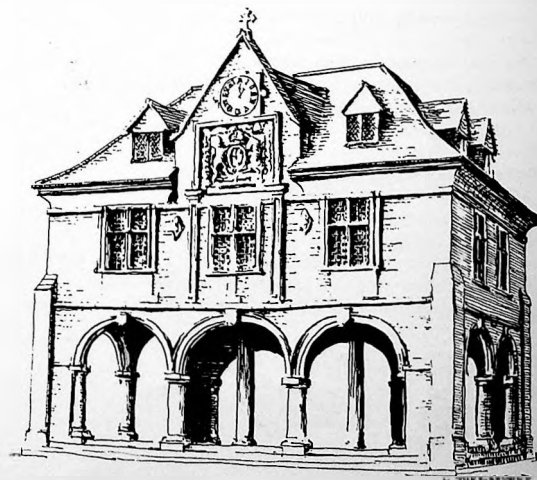
Feoffees were a form of local government (not peculiar to Peterborough) who in 1571 were entrusted (enfeoffed) by the other citizens with control of the land in and surrounding the town, being made responsible for its care and maintenance. They met at the Market Cross – which was then a single room over a Cross (where the present Guildhall was to be built a hundred years later to celebrate the restoration to the Throne of Charles II).

They dealt with legal matters concerning fees, rents and leases. It was from this building that proclamations of National interest were made including the Parliamentary election results. It is of interest that the change from the Julian Calendar (after Pope Julian) to the Gregorian (after Pope Gregory) viz – March 25th to January 1st was announced from this market cross in 1752.

In 1631 the Feoffees were in such bad repute that a new body was set up including the Dean, three Canons, the Vicar of St. John's and the Headmaster of King's School. All went well for nine years and then the Civil war broke out in 1640 following the execution of Charles 1st.

Much damage was done to the Cathedral and its contents – glass, statues, books and furnishings so that it ceased to function as a Cathedral for over 20 years.

1660 saw the return of Charles II from exile in Holland and the Feoffees were encouraged to rebuild and enlarge the Market cross. They were considerably helped by a public appeal launched by Lord Burghley supported by Lord Fitzwilliam – who gave £20 for the heraldic crest on the East wall.



The Guildhall, Peterborough

The building was completed in three years and follows closely in design the Guildhall of Amsterdam. It is an interesting thought that the name of the builder – John Lovin from Stamford might have come from a contraction of the Flemish name 'Louvain', and that he was concerned with both buildings. The total cost was £820 – the appeal fell short and so the Feoffees had some £20 worth Peterborough Halfpennies especially minted and issued in 1672. There are five of these in the Museum.

<sup>1</sup> Thorpe Hall was built for Oliver St. John, Lord Chief Justice of England under Oliver Cromwell.

<sup>2</sup> Peterborough was a Rotten Borough.

Apart from their own meetings the Feoffees (for £10 a year) rented the building to the Magistrates. A Court was held once a week for the next 152 years, then transferring to a new Sessions House in Thorpe Road in 1874, in order to allow the Guildhall to become the Council chamber of the newly constituted Municipal Corporation. During this time the Guildhall was also used for Auctions, Lectures, Dancing classes and Public Balls. In addition it was a small private school for 60 years before that moved to Deacons.

From 1690-1790 government of the city appears confused and with a great deal of uncertainty as to who was in charge, the Feoffees or the Bailiff and Governors (the latter being Burgesses, those citizens entitled to vote for M.P.s by right of holding land or paying rent. Some of these were elected by their fellow burgesses to be Governors, a similar post to that of modern day Councillors).

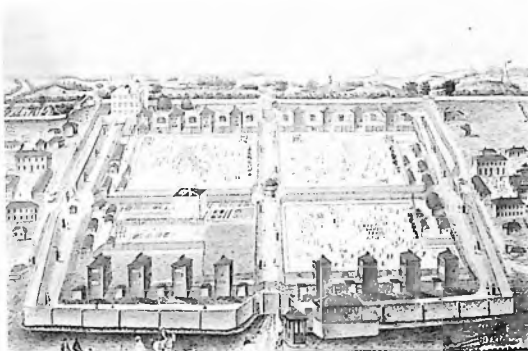
For this period too, the city seemed untouched by progress, the streets were muddy lanes or gravel tracks each with a 'sock' well sunk into the gravel for water which was all too often contaminated by nearby cess heaps. Those who could afford, travelled through the city by horse or sedan chair, rather than walking.

The Bell Inn at Stilton



It was the Napoleonic war which changed both the population size and the prosperity of the town. Many of the French encamped at the Norman Cross Prison visited the city and during their captivity, produced marvellous carvings (the objects were made almost entirely of cattle bones), now exhibited in the Museum.

To cope with the population increase 33 Peterborough pavement and improvement Commissioners were appointed. Their mandate was to pave, maintain and clean the streets. Also they were to stop the people burning animal bones on the side walks (a common activity), thus 'bonfires'.

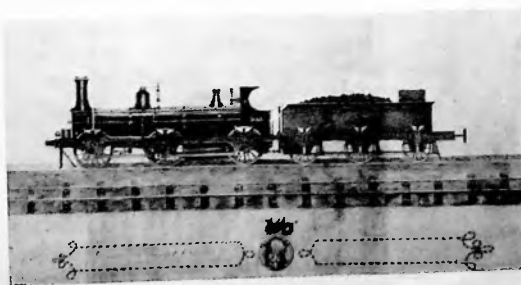


Norman Cross Prison

The Commissioners met for the first time on January 21st 1790 at the Guildhall but soon changed to the nearby Talbot Inn, as being more congenial. And so for the first time in the history of the city street drainage was installed and also oil street lamps which were only lit when there was no full moon.

To do all this they had permission to levy the first rate on property owners (but not farmland). The rate was not to exceed 1/- in the pound (5p). They could also erect Toll bars at the entrance to all main streets to the town.

Sixty years later in 1850 Parliament recognised the growth of the City, with the advent of the Railways in 1845.



The passing of the Peterborough Improvement and Cemetery Act enabled citizens to elect Commissioners on a three year basis — they had to be ratepayers and live within seven miles of the centre. The Act also allowed the Broadway Cemetery to be constructed with half consecrated by Bishop Davys in 1853 and the remainder to be reserved for non-conformist burials.

## Inflation, Poverty and Revolution take their toll.

*The last days of Henry VIII (he died in 1547) were the start of a period of great inflation. By the year 1560 goods had doubled in price and food had trebled with wages lagging far behind. Only the wealthy had access to medical care such as it was and for many decades deaths in childhood confounded continued attempts to increase the population.*

*With increasing demand for cash Henry had debased the coinage — clipping the edges of nine gold coins to make an additional tenth. Curiously enough for a short time it was made a criminal offence to charge interest on money lent.*

*These too were the days of compulsory attendance at church with statutory fines for non-attendance. The masses were completely illiterate and only capable of making their mark. A few boys endured the hard benches and the daily floggings at Grammar schools in order to learn English and speak Latin, while in contrast to the present day, there was no segregation by ability.*

*Local government before municipalisation in the 19th century was based on Shires (counties). The Monarchy would appoint a Lord Lieutenant and Sheriff to each Shire, while the latter had authority to appoint Magistrates. Knights to and maintain the Militia.*

*Shire government was directed from the Shire Moot and concerned itself mainly with Law and Order, defence and the gathering of taxes. They met in May and October — their members being drawn from each big town as well as representatives sent from the Hundred moots (which met on a monthly basis). One of the many problems facing County and Parish throughout these two centuries was the chaos of Poor Law administration. The Act of 1782 authorised the building of workhouses, which very soon became overcrowded with the destitute, women in childbirth, orphans and strays, able bodied unemployed men and women and the sick — all under one roof with the minimum of sanitation (one such house in London was reported to have 39 children in three beds).*

*In Peterborough the Westgate workhouse is preserved on the edge of the new City centre — it is said Charles Dickens stayed there — if so he obviously was able to use the experience in his books.*

*These were designated workhouses because the officials in charge were empowered and encouraged to supply work for the incumbents in order to save outdoor relief (viz — social security or unemployment pay). Indeed they were encouraged to subsidise employers to take on their more suitable candidates (viz-a-viz today). Those for whom no work was available or possible the rate from householders etc. would provide financial relief and means of obtaining minimal sustenance.*

*Two hundred years ago (1780) the unwanted side effects of the industrial revolution were the ever increasing numbers of unemployed — their place taken by machinery and the lowering of wages influenced by, amongst other factors the import of clothing made cheaper abroad from cotton exported from this country.*

*The Luddite movement named after a mythical Mr. Ned Ludd was a direct result of the foregoing and began amongst the framework knitters in the northern mills in 1812. It led to a series of burnings, destruction and rioting, up and down the country and punished by hanging or deportation, together with the creation of a stronger Yeomanry (as yet a Police force did not exist) to protect innocent citizens in each shire.*

*That the Yeomanry did not always protect was indicated by the infamous massacre of Peterloo (1818 — August 10th). This was at St. Peter's field in Manchester — Peterloo being a play on the word 'Waterloo' and many innocent people were slaughtered. As a result of protesting against this action at Peterloo which had been condoned and encouraged by the Government, Earl Fitzwilliam lost his post as Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding.*



**The state of the Nation – Law and Order down the ages.**

*In medieval days there was no organised police force, and so individuals, families and local groups or communities were obliged to fend for themselves against violence, crime or invasion of their land or property. From this arose the need for fortified towns (burhs or burghs) and castles with moats, whilst citizens armed themselves with clubs, knives, bows and arrows.*

*The King would use the Militia for quelling riots and disorders, which he frequently did but not always successfully.*

*The earliest attempt at policing at parish level was the appointment of the Beadle (Bedel or Bydell) by the Moot court. His job was to summon people to meetings, to make sure that each tithing man was keeping watch over his respective ten families and to collect fines from people who did not go to the parish church! He was assistant to the Parish Constable who was also appointed by the Moot.*

*The Constable had to see to the upkeep of the stocks and cages, look after the welfare of the poor and oversee the collecting of the rates and other dues. Finally he was responsible for providing men for service in the Militia of the town or shire. His was an unpopular post and some parish constables paid other citizens to do the job for them.*

*Certain major events in the 14th century were to place a severe strain on efforts to maintain law and order. Between 1348 and 1379 England was decimated by three epidemics of Black Death (bubonic plague), a rapidly fatal disease now known to be transmitted by rats which abounded in those days.*



*The consequently diminished working population led to an increased demand for the services of those remaining. Many left the villages where pay was poor and banding together scoured the countryside looking for jobs with higher pay. They were unscrupulous and so there was a great increase in crime and robbery with violence. To make matters worse, in 1351 the Government passed the Statute of Labourers Act which was the first national effort to control wages in the face of enormous inflation, and it was extremely unpopular!*

*There were, as a consequence, many minor uprisings over the next 30 years culminating in a full scale national riot in 1381, a few months after the final straw, the passing of the Poll tax, taxing every person in the land.*

*28 of the 40 counties or shires rose under Wat Tyler and marched on London, entering the Tower, creating chaos everywhere and holding the Capital for two days.*

*Promises of relief from the oppressive laws and more freedom assuaged the rebels and peace reigned, but only for a short while, for in a day or two Wat Tyler was stabbed by the Mayor of London in the presence of the 14 year old boy King, Richard II. Within days all the pledges and charters of liberation were rescinded. The Lord Mayor's dagger is preserved in the Fishmongers Hall close by London Bridge.*

*It was not until the mid 18th century that the first regular police, the Bow Street runners, stationed near Covent Garden, were organised by Henry Fielding the novelist and his brother. They helped to control crime and violence until the formation of the Metropolitan Police Force authorised by Sir Robert Peel, the Home Secretary in 1829. Hence the names, Bobbies and Peelers. This force became the model for others all over the country.*

**Transport**

The Nation's roads were so bad that in 1836 it was not safe to travel at more than six miles per hour by coach so it took at least twelve hours to reach London from Peterborough and at a cost of one pound and nine shillings (£1.45).

For the less wealthy, broadwheeled covered wagons travelled at 3 mph, while most other people walked.

In 1845 the first Railway reached Peterborough. The surveyor was George Stephenson, son of a miner and builder of the Rocket locomotive.

By 1861 there were four major railway companies operating through Peterborough and employing 2,000 men out of a total population of about 12,000.

1864 saw the last recorded use of a Sedan chair in the city, by Miss Percival of the Minster Precincts.

Horse buses were replaced by electric trams in 1903, with a maximum fare of less than 1p! The first double decker omnibus appeared in the City in 1924. To everyone's consternation it became stuck under Rhubarb Bridge on Lincoln Road (now demolished) for quite a while until a passer by suggested letting the tyres down!

**Water Transport**

For many centuries cargoes of corn, coal, malt and stone (from Barnack) were shipped from Peterborough throughout the region.

The first river bridge, built of wood by Abbot Godfrey of Croyland was always in need of repair and was eventually replaced by an iron bridge in 1872.

In 1934 the present concrete bridge and the railway viaduct were completed, together with the widening of Narrow Street now called Bridge Street.

**Mail**

Mail was originally carried by dispatch rider, coach, wagon or cart. In 1833 the City's first Post Office was opened in Priestgate and letters were delivered by hand from a shopping basket. In 1848 it moved to Long Causeway and in 1874 to Cumbergate. Here the office had to be enlarged three times before the new Post Office Sorting Centre near the Northern station was brought into use in 1977.

**Telephones**

In 1878 a lecture was given by a Mr. Vickers of Torquay on 'Professor Graham Bell's discovery' in the Drill Hall, Lincoln Road and it was demonstrated with a flute solo transmitted via a telephone line from the hall to Deacon's school.

17 years later the Peterborough Telephone Co. had 27 private and business subscribers. A century later, 1979 there were 160,000 subscribers with over 1,000 telephone kiosks in the city.

**Other Notes of Interest:**

In October 1896 at the Bedford Coffee House in Queen Street, 13 local government officers formed an association which accomplished not only their two objectives of superannuation and security of tenure, but also, from their meetings, stemmed the National Association of Local Government Officers – NALGO – a nationwide union with its birthplace in Peterborough.

The workers Educational Association also commenced in Peterborough.

**The City services**

Soon after 1874 the new council quickly established a first class water supply and sewage disposal system. They formed a Watch Committee – watching the City – which inaugurated a City Police force with Headquarters at Milton House (the first town house of the Fitzwilliam family donated to the City after the Battle of Waterloo for use as a general hospital equipped with thirty beds).

The police HQ was moved to lower Bridge Street in 1949 and subsequently in 1977 to Thorpe Wood.

In 1874 the force consisted of one chief, three sergeants and 14 men. In their first year five police had been charged with drunkenness, one for incompetence and yet another for being asleep on his beat!

Before 1821 and excepting for the nights of the full moon, the streets were lit by oil lamps. In 1845 an Ironmonger, Mr. Sawyer, bought the British Gas Co. and renamed it the Peterborough Gas Co. He then obtained authority to install gas lighting. His company was nationalised in 1949.

In 1893 a petition for electric street lighting was organised by Mr. Clarabut the Draper. This was eventually successful and in 1894 the City changed to electric with the new company opening its works at Albert Place in 1900. It was absorbed into the National Grid in 1948.

The Power station, although now superfluous and destined for complete demolition, has for years discharged heated water into the Nene thus preventing the river from freezing, a fact which enabled the City to install a heat pump for extracting heat from the river and transferring it to the outdoor swimming pool. This pump has been in operation since 1964.

**Fire Fighting**

A major fire in 1884 at the General Hospital in Priestgate (now the Museum) stimulated the reorganisation of the Fire Brigade and coincidentally the formation by interested citizens of a Volunteer Fire Brigade, now nearly a hundred years old and still a great help to the official brigade.

## Peterborough New Town

In 1967, after a satisfactory feasibility study by Sir Henry Wells the Government designated Peterborough as a new town and in 1968 set up the Development Corporation to work alongside and in partnership with the County and City Councils. The master plan was approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment in 1971.

## Government

Despite local opposition but with the help of the Ballot Act<sup>1</sup> of 1872 (which eliminated bribery and plurality of votes for rate-payers) – the city successfully applied to the Privy Council for a Charter of Incorporation. This was granted on March 17th 1874.

The new Council with Alderman Gates as the first Mayor took over and expanded the work of the Improvement Commissioners.



The first voting wards were of the North, South and East of the City. In 1898 an order in Council (from London) created the West ward.

April the 1st 1929 saw the Peterborough Extension Order incorporate Paston in the City. The City had now increased its size from 2,000 acres to 10,000 with a population of 42,000. The same year – 1929 saw Prince George lay the Foundation stone for the new Town Hall (Bridge Street) and also the opening of the New Memorial Hospital.

For 49 years until 1933 the Council met in the room over the Cross (renamed the Guildhall). Offices between it and St. John's church were erected late in the 19th Century and removed after the second world war.

In 1954 the City wards were increased to nine with Dogsthorpe, Park, Minster and Central.

In 1974 the City was granted Borough status with many of the privileges of a County. Technically it meant that the City now controlled the rural wards of Barnack and Thorney, the

Ortons and the urban district of Old Fletton. Also included were the rural district of Peterborough (Glinton, Newborough and Eye) and part of Alwalton, but not including the village. As from 1976 the District Council has 48 elected Councillors from wards covering the City, the New Town (Greater Peterborough) and the surrounding country as far as Barnack, Thorney, Glinton and Wittering.

## Local Politics

From 1529 until 1885, Peterborough as a 'rotten borough' sent two Members to Parliament at each general election. In those early days the Dean and Chapter held the patronage by dint of granting the vote to those who possessed property in the minster precincts, to Lords of Manors in the Soke and to those few freeholders paying 40 Shillings (£2) per annum for land they occupied. During these three centuries voting was open (secret voting starting in 1872 by ballot box) and hence as elsewhere very susceptible to bribery, corruption and plurality of voting.

By the mid 17th century, some householders who paid a local tax called Scot and Lot<sup>2</sup> were allowed to vote. The voters still formed a tiny proportion of all those living in the area.

Early Members in the 16th century were the Fitzwilliam family of Milton and Sir Walter Mildmay of Apethorpe – who became Chancellor to Queen Elizabeth. The two families maintained continued membership of the House for well over one hundred years together with other local people, often kinsmen of the clergy. In 1641 Sir Humphrey Orme M.P. rented a house for the administration of the Poor Law in Peterborough, the first in the City. He is the only person known to have had his memorial erected in the Cathedral before his death and live to see it desecrated (by Cromwell's soldiers). Others of note were Gilbert Dolben M.P. circa 1700, Judge of the Irish High Court and Edward Wortley Montague whose wife was a celebrated English poet and letter writer who gained fame also as the introducer of Smallpox vaccination into this country, not without some opposition! He was Ambassador to Turkey and donated the building in Westgate as a workhouse in 1734 (legend has it that is the one featured in Oliver Twist).

The Several Reform Acts of the 19th century livened up politics everywhere and Peterborough was no exception. Although patronage ceased to play a significant part, corruption was still marked whilst political parties became more defined and vociferous. The results continued to be announced from the steps of the Guildhall with all the atmosphere of the hustings and the police much in evidence. From 1930 when election night became an indoor event in the new Town Hall the excitement of previous years disappeared. Perhaps the only exciting night was the election of 1960 when Sir Harmer Nicholls was returned to Parliament by three votes after seventeen recounts!

## The Political scene, locally and nationally

After the Norman conquest government was by the King and his Council. Only when the King died was a new Council formed, and in any case they only met once or twice a year. It was not till 1262 that Simon de Montfort, with the docile acquiescence of Henry III called the first parliament of Crown, Peers and Commons (Knights from the Shires and Burgesses from the Borough). Thirty years later in 1295 King Edward I called another such parliament and thereafter they continued to meet regularly. In 1341 the Commons met separately from the Lords and thus created the House of Commons. In 1649 the House of Lords was abolished for 11 years until the restoration of Charles the Second in 1660. In 1689 William and Mary accepted the Crown of England on condition that Parliament became the paramount power.

The influence of the Church was such that it was not till 1829 that Catholics were allowed to stand for parliament and only in 1858 was the first Jew admitted. In 1865, throughout the country, only one in six of male adults had had the vote as determined by the strict rules of franchise dependent on financial and landholding status. Women had no vote.

Prior to 1867 it could be said that Parliamentary membership was largely a question of Peerage, Patronage, and Purchase with Party perhaps only a convenient label.

The 19th century however saw enlightenment of the populace throughout the land, as more and more demanded the right to influence government with needless to say much government opposition.

The second Reform Act of 1867 increased the number of voters to 2 million in a total of population of 27 million. At the same time John Stuart Mill laid the first bill before parliament for the enfranchisement of women. 51 years later after many further attempts and much suffering, women obtained the vote (in 1918) but only at the age of thirty (men had it at 21 years of age). The third Reform Bill was brought in by Gladstone in 1885 and doubled the number of voters, and gave the working men votes a majority for the first time.

In 1906 the Labour Party in the Commons was established.

In 1907 an act was passed enabling women to stand for seats on City Councils, etc.

The Mayor's Parlour



1 From the French 'Ballotte'. A little ball put secretly into a box was the voting method used by the ancient Greeks and Romans. In Peterborough as in other pocket boroughs, before 1872 votes could be bought with beer tickets!

2 Scot and Lot  
Scot is from Norse Skot – a contribution – a tax  
Lot means allotment or portion allotted to whoever pays the Scot or Tax the forerunner of rates in the Borough. Those paying were householders and in due course those paying qualified for the franchise (the vote).

# THE STORY OF PETERBOROUGH

Outside the West or King's Gate (12th c) we stand on firm ground that was once a bridge, probably of wooden construction. The bridge spanned a tributary of the Nene which originated at Tom Locke's spring near Westwood bridge, continued its way to Spital bridge and then followed the line of Long Causeway. Here its banks contained rings for the mooring of boats. West of the bridge in what is now Cathedral Square there would have been a stone cross, where the Guildhall now stands.



The West or King's Gate

Entering the West Gate we pass through a Gothic arch with, immediately behind, a slot in the roof indicating where a portcullis was housed ready for lowering in time of danger. When necessary the ancient wooden doors behind the portcullis could also be closed. This slot is followed by Norman arches, walls and vaulted roof. Over the gate can be seen the windows of the chapel dedicated to St. Nicholas, patron saint of scholars and children. In 1730 this chapel housed the Library of the Gentleman's Society, whilst in this century it became the Town Hall following their contribution of a major sum towards its restoration.

## its Cathedral

Leaving the West Gate we see on our left the east end of a church, the chapel of St. Thomas of Canterbury. The nave originally extended outside the precincts on to the site where Lloyd's bank now stands. It was pulled down in 1404 to provide stone for the rebuilding of St. John's church on its new site (completed in 1407). The relics of St. Thomas a Becket, his shirt, surplice and the bloodstained stone where he fell in Canterbury were brought to Peterborough in 1177 by Abbot Benedict, who, as Prior of Canterbury, knew Becket well. Some of these relics might have rested in the Becket Casket, which was sold at Sotheby's in 1979 for £240,000.



The Becket Chapel

From 1541 to 1885 the chapel was the Cathedral Grammar School (King's). In 1886 it became the meeting place of the Peterborough Museum Society, but it is now the Cathedral Song School. The house on the other side of the chapel served as the King's School Headmaster's house whilst the boys were boarded in the Georgian houses beyond.

To the left we see a wrought iron gateway (1979) which provides vehicular access to the Cathedral precincts; it is closed for one day each year. A stone head of Henry VIII is set in one wall. Right of the wrought iron gate is a high wall which once formed part of the Abbot's stables. The arch to the left of the Cathedral built by Abbot Kirkton (dated 1496 to 1528) once led to the Priory lodging which now forms the core of the Chapter House and Deanery. Gracing the arch are various heraldic carvings, including, on the right side, a carving of a church (kirk) on a beer barrel (tun) — a stone *rebus* or pun on the name of the builder (Kirkton).

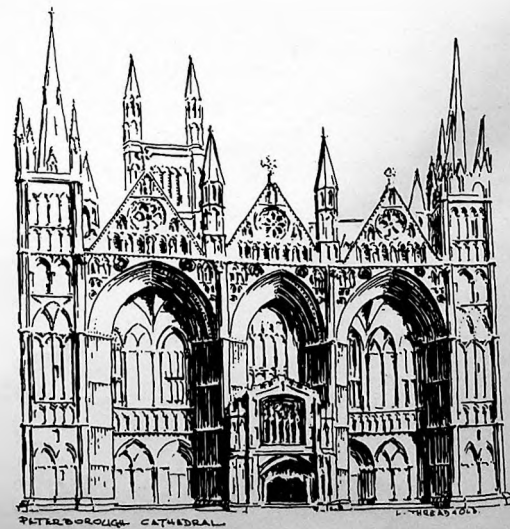
The Deanery garden extends towards the Development Corporation offices and is dominated by a mound called Tout Hill. This is the site of a castle built by Abbot Thorold (appointed by William the Conqueror) after the monastery



The gateway to the Chapter House

had been occupied and ransacked by Hereward the Wake in 1070.

To the right of the West Gate we note the refurbished monastic buildings with the Knights' chamber above the archway entrance to the Bishop's palace. At the end of this line of buildings, adjacent to the gate, was the site of the Abbot's prison (13th c). One of the original internal doors of the prison is still in situ and can be seen outside the



PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL

precincts. The remainder of these buildings were known as the King's lodgings where many visitors including English Monarchs and their retinues stayed.

Turning now to the Cathedral, we are greeted by the beauty of the West front, one of the finest in Europe. After its construction (1180 – 1238) the area in front, now grassed, was called the Galilee or gallery court. This court would have been the scene of much daily activity with labourers, servants and pilgrims as well as knights on horseback. We can look up at the newly repaired spire on the right surrounded by beautifully carved spirelets, the unfinished tower behind, the symmetrical gables and finally the impressive bell tower which at one time held ten of the heaviest bells in the country. There are now only five, and these have been silent since 1919, for fear (probably groundless) of further movement of the centre part of the West Front. Some 700 years later between 1893 and 1902 the West Front was 'pinned' to prevent it falling further forwards. The front studs of the metal ties can be seen between the sculptured figures along the top of the arches. If we stand to one side of the West Front, we can see that the two centre pillars are leaning forwards about two feet. The spacing of the arches is a little odd in as much as the Centre Arch is the narrower. It is thought that the original design envisaged the Central Arch as now, with narrower arches either side to provide access to the side doors. Probably because of difficulty in lighting the inside of the building, the decision was made to widen the outside arches to throw more light on to the West windows. The arches are 82 feet high, the south spire 156 feet and the whole front 156 feet wide. The parvise or porch is within the central arch, the upper chamber of the porch, once the chapel of the Holy Trinity (1375) became the Cathedral library in the late 18th century, following the latter's removal from the 'new building' at the east end of the cathedral. Most of the books were moved to the University of Cambridge. However, the priceless hand-written Chronicle of Robert of Swaffham (13th c) remains in the city after having been rescued by a minor canon from Cromwell's soldiers for the sum of ten shillings (50p). Thanks to a gift of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, the lower part of the library now houses a Treasury where diocesan church plate and other objects are on public display.

Above the arches are statues of the Patron Saints, St. Peter (centre), St. Paul and St. Andrew, together with those of various monarchs and bishops.

High up on the inside of the northernmost arch are two recent sculptures by Alan Durst of Peterborough. One depicts St. Oswald, King of Northumbria (625-642 A.D.) who was killed by Penda, a pagan king of Mercia. (The arm of St. Oswald was brought to the Abbey in Saxon times). The other statue is of Queen Elizabeth II who distributed the Royal

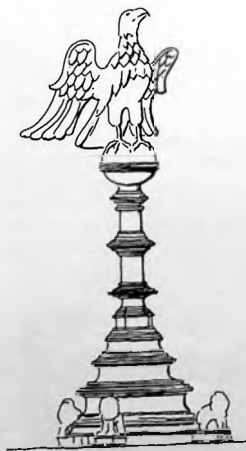
Maudy money' in the cathedral in 1975.

On entering the porch, we see an unusual sculpture at the foot of the West door. It is said to be of Simon Magus being cast down from heaven for attempting to fly. The great doors are original 13th century and are opened to admit a new Bishop or on other special occasions.

Standing at the West end of the nave we have behind us, on both sides of the entrance, paintings of 'Old Scarlett'. This parish sexton lived for 94 years in the 16th century, burying two Queens and two generations of the town's householders. His body lies under the stone floor below his epitaph.

Looking along the Nave we note two wider Norman pillars about seventy feet from the West door. At one time it was planned to finish the nave at this point. Looking upwards we see the 13th century painted ceiling (there are only three others of this type, at Hildersheim in Germany, at Dadesjo in Sweden and Zillis in Switzerland but none of them reach more than half the length of the nave of Peterborough Cathedral. The ceiling can be illuminated and with the aid of a special mirror in the central aisle, the detail can be more clearly seen. There is also a lithograph of the design at the back of the choir stalls in the northern aisle.

Looking along the nave we see the 15 feet high Crucifix recently donated to the Cathedral. The cross is suspended over the site of the rood screen which divided the lay folk in the nave from the monks in the choir.



15th century Brass Lectern

We now enter the choir, passing to one side of the 15th century medieval brass lectern, and admire the detail of the carvings above the stalls, together with the pulpit and the Bishop's throne. These were all erected during the late 19th century restoration to a design by J. L. Pearson, then Cathedral architect. Above is the 150 feet high tower with its lantern roof. Following the discovery of widening cracks in the 1830's, the tower was found to be so unsafe that it was taken down to the bedrock and rebuilt. Many of the original stones were carefully numbered for the rebuilding.

Looking eastwards, we can admire the tessellated marble floor (best seen from above whilst touring the tower). Beyond is the High Altar with its



beautiful canopy erected in 1894. The upper part is made of Derbyshire alabaster. This part of the church is called the sanctuary or Presbytery, where the presbyters or priests administer the Sacrament. The wooden vaulting of the choir roof is original and was restored after gunshot damage by Cromwell's soldiers. Like the nave roof, it too can be illuminated.

Turning to the South aisle, at the West end we can see the Chapel of St. Sprite (Holy Spirit). This chapel contains memorials to the boys of King's school and St. Peter's college who fell in the two great wars. The stalls are modern but incorporate the original misericords. The folding seats formed a ledge which enabled aged ecclesiastics to rest in a standing position.



Further to the East we go through the Bishop's door into the Cloisters. These were originally roofed and had 36 stained glass windows overlooking the well in the middle, depicting stories from old and new testaments, the kings and queens of England and the Abbots of the monastery. There are wash places for the monks in the far wall. On the East side was the Chapter house, so named because the monks assembled each morning to read a chapter of their rules and also conduct the day to day business of the monastery. This procedure continues to this day – a thousand or more years



# THE STORY OF PETERBOROUGH its Cathedral



St. Benedict's Chapel

later. In the Dormitory along the south side was the refectory while the Abbots Lodging fronted on to the west side. Behind lay the Infirmary, Kitchens and Brewery. Walking back into the main body of the Cathedral and



Tomb of Bishop Magee

eastwards along the south aisle, we pass the memorial to Edith Cavell. This heroic British nurse helped many soldiers to escape from Germany in the first world war, but was tragically executed as a spy in Brussels on October 12th, 1915. She had been a pupil teacher in the school at Laurel Court in the Cloisters in the 1890's.

Next we enter the south transept. In the far corner is the Sacristy (robing room) near the entrance to the foundations of the Saxon church. On our left are three chapels, first St. Oswald's with the newel staircase going up to the watching place for monks who guarded the Saints arm; second, St.

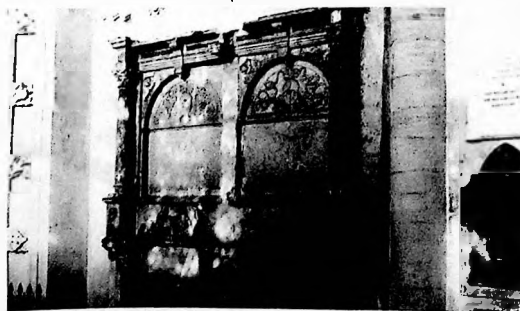
Benedict's dedicated to the Italian founder of monasterism in the west at Monte Cassino near Naples (after whom the Benedictine order was named). He died 400 years before his order was established here. The third chapel, that of Kyneburga and Kyneswitha, sisters of Wulfhere, King of Mercia, is now appointed for the use of the Mothers Union. On its left hand wall is a beautiful carving of the annunciation by Alan Durst.

Back in the south aisle we see the place where Mary, Queen of Scots, was buried for 25 years before her son James I of England (James VI of Scotland) ordered the removal of her body to Westminster in 1612.

Here too we see memorials of two Bishops of Peterborough who, although elsewhere when they died, requested burial here. Bishop Mandell Creighton became Bishop of London, was a leading historian of the Church of England, and in 1896 represented Britain at the coronation of the last Czar of Russia. Bishop Magee was at Peterborough for 23 years before becoming Archbishop of York. In fact he died in London before his translation to York. He was best known for his oratory in the House of Lords and as a preacher, with wit, humour and common sense. He sat on a government commission to form the 1872 Medical Act which, amongst other provisions, established General Medical practice as we know it today. This made it lawful for doctors to operate on patients. He once said he would prefer England to be free rather than compulsorily sober.

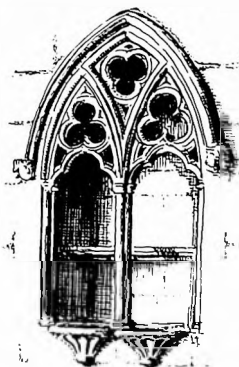
Further along the south aisle we pass several effigies of known and unknown Abbots, including that of John de Sais who started the building of the Cathedral in 1118; also Martin of Bec who moved the site of the market from east of the Monastery (where it had started by royal charter some 200 years previously) to the west where it was to remain for 600 years i.e. to about the middle of the 20th century.

On the wall on our left we pass the desecrated monument to

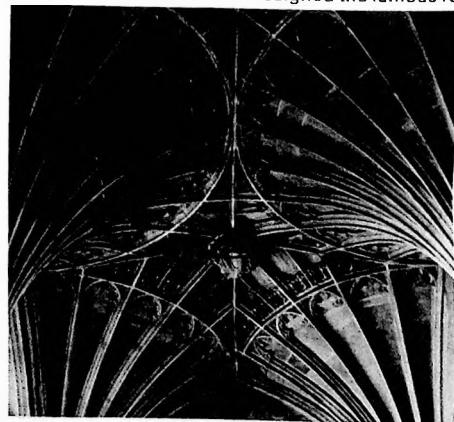


Monument to Sir Humphrey Orme

Sir Humphrey Orme, erected by himself, although he lived to see it destroyed by Cromwell's soldiers. In Cromwell's day much damage was done to books, monuments, panelling, stonework and stained glass. Some of the glass was found afterwards and is now in the two windows of the apse behind the high altar. It is hard to realise that for 23 years there were no services of any kind in this Cathedral until Dean Costin returned from exile in 1660 — the same year that Charles II was restored to the throne of England.

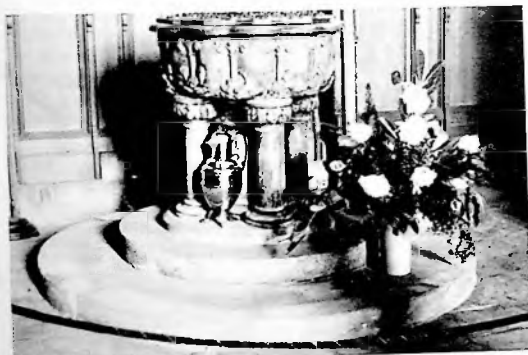


Wastell, the master mason who designed the famous roof of



Before entering the New Building we see a piscina (a washing place for communion vessels) high in the wall. At one time, the aisle ended here in a Chapel which, when the new building was carried out, was removed and the floor lowered. Below the piscina we can see the difference in stone facing. This detail is repeated as we enter the North aisle.

Years after the Cathedral was finished it was decided to build an extension at the East end. This took 80 years, from 1438 to 1518 and utilised the then popular style of perpendicular gothic.<sup>2</sup> The impressive fan-vaulting is believed to have been designed and built by William



Font with 13th century Bowl

King's College Chapel, Cambridge. The extension is still called the 'New Building' and from it we can enter the original rounded east end, or apse, behind the High Altar. The beautiful ceiling of the apse illustrates 'I am the Vine, Ye are the branches'. This apse is reputed to be the finest in the country. On its two inner walls hang Flemish tapestries, over 300 years old which depict the release of St. Peter from prison and his healing of the man at the gate of the Temple. In the north wall are two eleventh century gravestones. At the East end we can study the recently cleaned Hedda or Monk's stone on which are carved 10 Apostles with Christ and the Virgin. The two missing Apostles were originally at each end of the stone. Its date is somewhere between 775 and 825.

In the North Aisle, we come to the tomb of Catherine of Aragon, the first wife of Henry VIII and Queen of England for 24 years. She was married in 1509 after eight years of widowhood, her first husband Arthur, Prince of Wales, having died at the age of 16 in 1501. Her daughter by Henry became Queen Mary I of England in 1553. After her death in 1535 at Kimbolton Castle Catherine's body was brought to Peterborough, preceded by a cortège of 16 priests on horseback, four banners and four golden standards and followed by gentlemen officials and ladies on horseback, with chambermaids, in a wagon. The entire party stayed overnight in Sawtry. It is thought to have been Henry's continued respect for his first wife's grave that saved our Cathedral from demolition four years later. Some 80 years on, her tombstone was desecrated by Cromwell's soldiers (its remains rest on the side pillars). Over 200 years later in 1896 following a nationwide appeal to all the 'Kates of England', the present tombstone of Northumberland marble

was laid to commemorate her burial place, surmounted by the Royal Standards of England and Aragon, renewed in 1981.

In the North aisle there is a nicely executed balsa wood scale model of the Cathedral, made by boys of King's school to mark the 13th centenary of the abbey.

Turning into the North transept we enter the present Lady Chapel with the choir vestry to our right. The entrances to the original 13th century lady chapel which stood outside the North aisle can be seen inside the vestry. This chapel was removed in 1651, reputedly to provide stone for repairs to the cathedral and for work at Thorpe Hall.

Continuing down the aisle we enter the Baptistry. This contains a font with a 13th century bowl and we can look up to see the sculpture of Catherine of Aragon by Alan Durst.

#### Tour of the Tower

Passing through the door in the choir vestry, we ascend the newel staircase to the first level in the north transept and see at close hand the 19th century stained glass windows. From here we climb to the inside of the transept roof. The roof beams were completely restored in 1924 following damage by death watch beetle and they are now likely to last another thousand years.

A short step or two further up and we enter the Lantern tower, 120 feet up from where can be seen the Nave in its entirety, together with the High Altar and the intricately patterned floor of the Chancel.

Ascending the stairs in the North West corner, we reach the top of the tower. From here we can admire the far reaching views of the surrounding countryside, the river Nene, the new city centre, the embankment, the new parkways, Thorpe Wood, Crowland Abbey and, on a fine day, Ely Cathedral. Descending the tower we can walk along the northern parapet outside the nave roof to the Bell tower and look at the reconstructed windlass—one of the only three in England of a similar age. We notice too the marked curving forwards of the West front from inside. Finally we come down 130 or so steps of the newel staircase to ground level in the Baptistry.



- 1 Maundy Money; this is distributed on the Thursday before Good Friday. From the word 'Mandatum' in the first chant or antiphon of that day — 'mandatum novum do vobis' — 'a new commandment I give you', relating to Jesus washing the feet of the poor as an act of humility. Later the custom changed to the priest, Pope or Sovereign giving goods and money.
- 2 Gothic; a derogatory term meaning barbarous and applied by the builders and architects of the Renaissance period (15 c) who imitated and revived the Greek and Roman classical styles. The basis of Gothic architecture is the pointed arch which superseded the rounded Norman arch in the 12th century. Most of our churches were built in Gothic style from the 12th to the early 15th centuries. No longer is the term 'Gothic' derogatory, indeed the reverse is true and the style is now much admired.

# THE STORY OF PETERBOROUGH

## Health and Education

### The Ill-health of the Nation

*Before the 13th century health care in Britain was primitive and born of ignorance. Those hospitals which survived the dissolution were for the most part places from which patients were rarely discharged alive.*

*Many children died before, at, or soon after birth (Queen Anne 1702-1714) had seventeen children but only one reached the age of twelve, and she was bled every day in each pregnancy as a precaution against 'fever'. Many died (in some years, more than were born) from diphtheria, smallpox, pneumonia, dysentery, cholera or plague. The causes of all these and many others were completely unknown for hundreds of years, until the 19th century, when the responsible bacteria and viruses were gradually identified, with the aid of the invention of the microscope etc.*

*Thus for years treatment was entirely in the dark and often carried out by unqualified doctors and quacks or mountebanks (so called because they would come to markets and fairs, mount a bench or bank, and sell their pills and potions to all and sundry).*

*All that parish officers could do was to isolate diseased people in their houses (often with a sign) away from the community. For years they allowed excreta to contaminate well water in the streets but paradoxically they fined citizens who burnt animal bones on the side walks, although this practice did in fact prevent some animal diseases e.g. Anthrax, being transmitted to humans. The prevalence of body lice and nits encouraged men and women, Lords and Ladies, to shave their heads and wear wigs. The ravages of smallpox prompted men not to propose marriage unless they knew the young lady had already had the disease.*

*Although an act of 1511 empowered bishops to licence physicians and from the 12th century surgeons and barbers were closely associated, some shaving and extracting teeth (without anaesthetic, the victim being held down in the chair!) Others, called Barber – surgeons doing some forms of surgery, mainly lancing and bleeding, as well. The barbers advertised with a red and white pole whilst the barber-surgeons had a similar pole but also a pot of red paint underneath.*

*In 1745 the surgeons formed their own company, but the barbers were allowed to continue their dentistry, advertising by means of a large tooth painted on their window. This profession had advanced to the extent that by surreptitiously removing teeth from the dead they were able to supply false teeth for the living, taking the right size from their shelf and firmly placing it in the socket whilst the client was still unconscious from the extraction and many such transplants did in fact 'take'.*

*It was at this time that the famous surgeon John Hunter came from Edinburgh to London to set up the first Anatomy teaching school in Windmill Street – now, not inappropriately, the Windmill Theatre.*

*Qualified Obstetricians were first called man-midwives in the 18th century and were very much resented as interfering, by the established midwives, who for centuries had regarded 'lying in' and childbirth as entirely their province.*

*These years too saw the building of many now famous hospitals, but another 100 years was to pass before the medical profession was properly constituted by the Medical Act of 1858. The commission to formulate the Act included Bishop Magee of Peterborough. Thereafter the care of health went forward on a much firmer foundation.*

*From 1858 we advance to the first clean or bacteria free operation in the world (Lister of Glasgow 1865). The first X-rays (Roentgen 1895) enabled doctors to confirm their diagnoses and led in due course to the detection of abnormalities before birth. The use of radio-active elements now enable 'scanning' to spot tumours and other diseases before they cause symptoms or show signs. Research into the inherent power of the body to resist disease, acquired over millions of years and called immunology, has led to the development of treatment which helps the body to accept a transplant rather than reject it.*

### Health in Peterborough

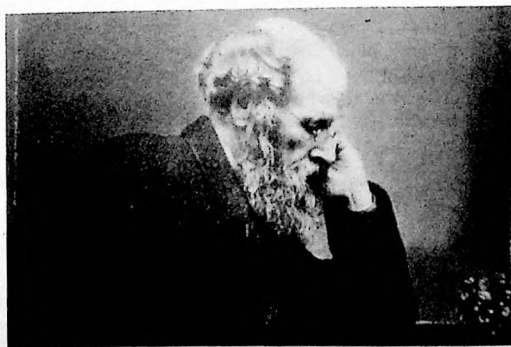
At the time the Guildhall was under construction, c 1665, the city was devastated by the last great plague epidemic. Many of its victims were interred in the Pest House (in Westgate), others in the parish churchyard (near Crescent bridge), whilst still more in their own back gardens!

For more than 1200 years the citizens drank water from 'sock' wells in the gravel, one to each street or alley and usually close by would be a smelly mass of household rubbish including excreta, at first exposed for all to see, but later walled around. The well in Church Street was still in use at the beginning of this century.

Smallpox had a special significance for Peterborough as it was the first city in the provinces to witness experimental inoculation with cowpox – an idea brought to this country by Lady Mary Wortley Montague, wife of one of the M.P.s for the city, in 1734. He had been Ambassador to Turkey and what she saw there (60 years before Jenner) convinced her that inoculation was a good preventive measure. The city thought otherwise and burnt down the house where her two inculcators, Sutton and Bond, were working.

Subsequently the city had to wait for another 100 years before vaccination was allowed in the newly opened first general hospital (1822), at Milton House (town house of the Fitzwilliam family) in Milton Street in an area at the west end of Westgate once called 'Newtown' and now under the Queensgate multi-storey car park. Newtown was on the fringe of the first expansion of Peterborough carried out by Abbot Martin le Bec in the 12th century.

Dr. Walker achieved the unusual distinction of being the first provincial surgeon to be awarded an Honorary Fellowship of the English College of Surgeons. His technique for reduction



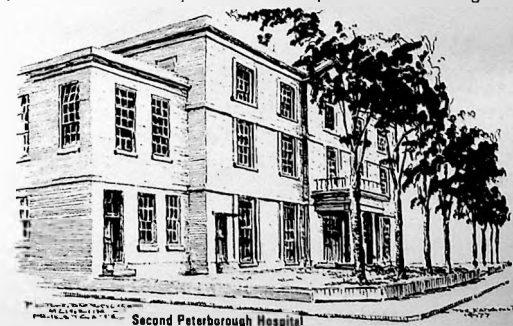
Dr. T. J. Walker, first Peterborough surgeon

of a dislocated hip under anaesthesia became well known and he was the first surgeon in England to describe and operate upon a cyst of the pancreas (the sweetbread).

With the coming of the railways in 1856 the need for a larger hospital prompted the Earl Fitzwilliam to allow his Priestgate home to be converted for medical use, it was here that Mr. F. C. Taylor Hospital Secretary enabled Peterborough to become the first provincial hospital to use an X-ray machine. He died of the effects of X-ray burns in 1927. Thus what is now the Museum became Peterboroughs hospital for 72 years until the Memorial Hospital opened in 1928. Incidentally it was not until 1894 that the Priestgate hospital acquired an operating theatre! Also in 1894 a smallpox hospital was built in Fengate, enlarged in the last epidemic of that disease – 1928 – and finally closed down in 1971. In 1900 a 30 bedded infectious fever hospital – St. Peter's was established near to the regional swimming pool.

In 1969 the Peterborough District Hospital was opened (never officially because of legal problems connected with certain building aspects) with a thousand beds overall and some seven operating theatres. The District Hospital takes medical students for part of their training from both Cambridge and Leicester and there is also a well established training unit for those doctors entering general practice. A further hospital is planned to be built in the Westwood area in the late eighties to cope with the city expansion.

Prior to 1822 hospitalisation of the sick appeared to be the responsibility of the Abbey. Apart from the infirmary in the precincts, they established St. Leonards Hospital for Leprosy, adjacent to Spital Bridge – hence the name of the bridge, both this and the hospital of St. Thomas Martyr (in the area of Cumbergate) continued for some time after the dissolution, probably becoming almshouses for the sick, poor and destitute. The Spital building was eventually pulled down but the Cumbergate almshouse continued to be supported by the Feoffees under the Poor Law Act of 1601, and now, with the one in Westgate (Wortley's workhouse) both have been preserved in the City Centre development of Queensgate.



Second Peterborough Hospital

The Milton Street hospital was supported by the residual monies from the defence force after the Napoleonic War. It held 30 beds and any operations necessary were carried out in the wards by the surgeon Dr. Thomas Walker (whose great grandson had a general practice in Westgate, now the Trustee Savings Bank).

#### Education in Peterborough

For nearly 1000 years education was confined to the precincts of the Abbey. There was a school for the choristers and from here at the age of nine, if they wished, the could go to the Cloister school (later to be called the Grammar School). For over 300 hundred years from the Reformation days of Henry VIII the grammar school was housed in the Becket chapel adjacent to the West or King's gate and now the song school.



Deacons School, Cowgate



Adult Education, Brook Street

From 1857 onwards parish schools were established in each of the growing parishes of Peterborough later to be absorbed into County control.

The Peterscourt building in New Road was designed by Sir

Gilbert Scott. Opened in 1859 it served as a Teacher Training College until 1924.

Contrary to the provisions of the 1870 Educational Act Peterborough did not form a School Board but did have an attendance officer as well as establishing a 'labour examination' for pupils wishing to leave at fourteen and start working.

Private education was available in several small units, usually in private houses throughout the city. Perhaps the best known was Laurel Court in the Minster Precincts, where Edith Cavell of Norwich studied before becoming a nurse in the First World War with the British Forces. She successfully helped prisoners to escape from Germany but for this was shot as a spy in Brussels in October 1915.

Moving into the 20th century the Butler Act of 1944 established amongst much else the 'eleven plus' examination for entry into Grammar schools. After the Second World War the Comprehensive system abolished this test and also, as far as possible instituted Co-education as a principle. With various compromises Peterborough has reached what appears to be a satisfactory result from all the changes brought about.

In 1721 Thomas Deacon, a Peterborough Feoffee, established a school for boys essentially to train them for entry to apprenticeship. This school was situated in Cowgate, then in Deacons Street (now part of Queensgate) and finally moved to its present site in 1960.

The present Guildhall was a schoolroom for many years before transferring to Deacon's in 1839.

The late 18th century saw the start of voluntary schools by philanthropic and church organisations. Amongst these were the National in Nelson Street (Queensgate) and later on in about 1852 a non-conformist school was started in Westgate Congregational Chapel, sponsored by the British and Foreign Bible Society. The National closed down in 1924, but the Westgate school eventually moved to a new building in Brook Street which now houses the Adult Education Centre.

Technical education in the city really commenced in 1945 with the joining together of the three separate institutes—the Technical, Commercial and Junior evening institutes into one Technical College (first housed in two prefabricated huts in Garton End Road) with a full-time Principal.

These premises were donated by Hotpoint Ltd. with their equipment by Newall Engineering. Thus was the start and demand for the services of the college increased yearly. A large site was acquired in Park Crescent and the first instalment of new buildings opened in 1952. Four more were to follow, with the fifth and final extension being opened by H.R.H. Princess Alexandra, the Hon. Mrs. Angus Ogilvy, G.C.V.O. on the 10th July, 1959.

#### English education

*The establishment of many grammar schools by Henry VIII gave the first real stimulus to education. However over the next 200 years standards declined rapidly in most areas due to many reasons, either religious, social or political. It might be safely stated that a lot of people thought it highly dangerous to educate the common folk, who might be incited to revolution. Also, such education might have decreased the numbers of willing servants. The same decline in standards affected even the two universities, Oxford and Cambridge, where for long periods there was little or no teaching and often no examinations.*

*The social conscience awoke in the reign of Queen Anne (1702-1714) when efforts by many individuals up and down the country, working under the aegis either of the Church of England (national schools) or the Non-conformist groups, played a small but effective part in education. These schools together with those of the Roman Catholics rapidly spread to all towns and taught large numbers of children of middle and lower class background and indeed many more than those attending grammar schools. They were very popular, the charges never enough and finances were consequently tight, so finally, many were rescued by the Forster Education Act of 1870 which created School Boards with regular financial support and the facility to co-ordinate building plans and teacher supply on a national basis. Interestingly enough the act allowed parents to withdraw their children from religious instruction and also banned definitive instruction of any one religious formula. A further act in 1876 made attendance compulsory and the schools immediately became overcrowded! In 1891 all education under school boards was made free and in that year the County Councils were authorised to set up Colleges of Technical Education, whilst in 1902 County and Municipal councils took over all the Board schools and they became rate-aided Council schools.*

#### Secondary schools.

*At the beginning of the 19th century and before the voluntary schools were thought of, there were three kinds of education available:*

- 1) *Fashionable Public schools (called public but really private) with a purely classical curriculum and badly disciplined.*
- 2) *Private academies for the middle classes giving a better education and discipline.*
- 3) *The old endowed grammar schools, some of which had markedly deteriorated through the negligence and corruption of the previous two centuries.*

*However, by the end of the 19th century the private academies were disappearing as more and more voluntary, public and day fee-paying schools started. It was only however in the latter part of Queen Victoria's reign that girls were given any educational chance at all.*

*The birth of universal education could be said to be coupled with the great expansion of the Empire and so produced a wealth of writers, philosophers, scientists, poets and artists such as Milton, Wren, Newton, Hogarth, Austen, Wordsworth, Constable and many more. Such a galaxy of talent over two centuries facilitated by the advantages of education must have matched the halcyon days of Greek or Roman times.*



# THE STORY OF PETERBOROUGH

## Markets, Fairs and Commerce

### Markets

From early days history records that Peterborough market was granted a charter from King Edgar (959-975) whose reign was peaceful and a time of national prosperity. The charter also gave the right for a toll (payment) to be levied by the Abbot on all merchandise coming to the Market, and gave him the authority to set up a mint, which he did at St. Martin's, Stamford.

Although there were some shops the market was the main location for exchange of goods. It was originally sited to the east of the Abbey and continued for 200 years (c 1140) approximately at the junction of St. John's Street and Vineyard Road. Initially, it was held on Sundays and from c 1200 it changed to Saturdays.

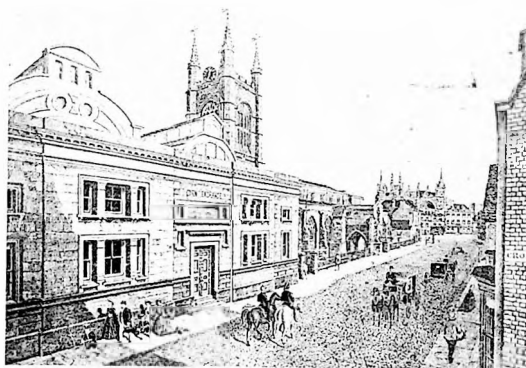


Soon after this, the Woolcombers market became established in Cumbergate near the Skin market and in about 1390 the Brabant weavers came over from Brussels, probably settling in Westgate.

The Market was controlled by the Abbot's Bailiff who held the court of Piepowder (from the French Pied-poudreux meaning dusty footed or vagabond) which, among other activities regulated weights and measures, and tried the cases brought before it by the Ale-tasters, Leather searchers and Virtual examiners so maintaining the quality of goods sold.

In Elizabethan times the Court Leet took over similar functions. The Butter market had been under the Cross (the present Guildhall) for centuries, finishing only in 1927.

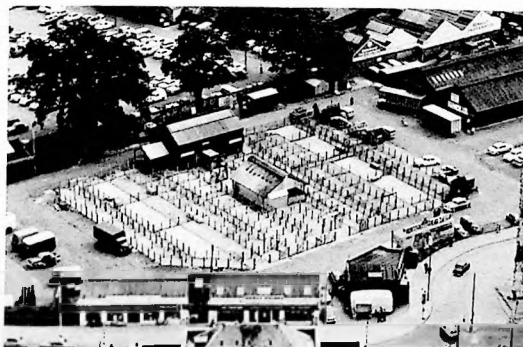
Among the many activities of the market were spinning, malting and the marketing of wild duck from the fens. By the end of the 18th century the Corn Market, one of the busiest in



The Corn Market

England, was sited just west of St. John's on the corner of Church Street and Queen's Street, where originally there was the city's first playhouse, the Hippodrome.

In 1865, owing to a tremendous increase in population (due to the railways) the butchers and farming interests moved into Cattle Market Road and the former were dealing by rail direct with the Smithfield market in London.



The Cattle Market

In 1876 the new City Corporation bought the market rights from the Dean and Chapter for £100. In 1963 they moved the general market to the Cattle market site in 1979 the new modernised covered market was opened alongside the first multi-storey car park on the same site.

In summary, Peterborough has had on three sites a thriving market for over one thousand years.

### Fairs

From the Latin 'Feria' meaning holiday, fairs were held periodically, from earliest times, usually during the Spring, Summer or Autumn, always at Church festivals or Saints days and invariably with sideshows, amusements and merry-making with or without some commerce and trade. In some instances they might last up to a week. Peterborough, over the centuries, has had some six annual fairs, but only the Bridge Fair survives.

The earliest fair (St. Peter's, June 29th, still celebrated by the Cathedral) was granted by Richard the Lion Heart to Abbot Benedict in 1189. For 700 years it was held on the present Cathedral Square, ceasing about 1800, but the tradition continued with the Cherry Fair which was held until the 1920s, held on the site of the Football car park.

In 1268 Henry III gave the right of a Fair for a week starting on the second Sunday in Lent. This did not appear to have lasted long and was probably transferred to August 5th as St. Oswald's Fair.

Oswald was a Christian King of Northumbria (625-642) who was killed by the pagan King Penda of Mercia. The Northumbrian King's relics were brought to the first Abbey of Peterborough. St. Oswald's Fair lasted till about 1650.

The Ram Fair, an offshoot of the Bridge Fair was an autumn fair from 1864 or perhaps earlier. The Wood Fair was held near the river bank, up to as late as 1936.



Market in Long Causeway



Bridge Fair

The Bridge Fair, the principal one, was authorised by a charter from Henry VIth in 1439, to be held on St. Matthews day and for two days after, from the 20th to the 22nd of September. Around 1850 it was moved to the first Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of October. Now it is but a shadow of the original. In those early days it was an occasion for the countryside to pour into the city with both trade and amusements overflowing into the surrounding streets including numerous drinking booths and much conviviality. It was opened by Proclamation, as it still is, and a procession led by the High Bailiff and Town Crier. Now the Mayor and Beadle perform the same duty with perhaps less pomp and ceremony, but with a sausage supper afterwards in the Town Hall.

#### The Agricultural Show

The Agricultural Show commenced in 1798 and over nearly 200 years has occupied six sites in and around the city, starting with a field of about one acre, where the telephone car park now is, and finally a 300 acre site at Alwalton. At the start the income was under £100, now it is over £200,000. After the first sixty years the show moved to a Broadway site for four years and then to Boroughby (in the vicinity of the Odeon on a field of twelve acres between Lincoln Road and Park Road, belonging to Mr. Little).

The show stayed here for twenty years before moving to Millfield, behind Adam's Garage. This field had at one time a Mill and incidentally the Peterborough Gibbet (moved from the River Bridge area) prior to its final resting place on Flagfen).

In 1911 the show moved to a 33 acre site at Eastfield where it stayed for 54 years.

In 1966 a new 300 acres site at Alwalton was acquired for the newly formed East of England Show.

In 1878 a Foxhound show was started alongside the Agricultural Show and gained such a reputation that it became the 'Royal Foxhound Show' in 1934. Thus briefly is a story of success and expansion bar the year 1874 when they ran short of money and had to borrow from their own treasurer! The show has been graced by Royal visits since the year 1895.



Agricultural Show, Eastfield



East of England Showground, Alwalton

## Commerce

### ESTABLISHED OVER 150 YEARS:

- 1802 The oldest commercial firm – Fox and Vergette commenced.
- 1830 Stanley's Ironworks – started in Queen's Street, making agricultural equipment. The Stanley Recreation Ground was given as a memorial by his widow.
- 1836 John Thompson and Co. established a world-wide reputation as repairers and builders of Churches. They built the present Town Hall in 1928. John Thompson was twice Mayor of the City.

### OVER 100 YEARS:

- 1848 Earl Fitzwilliam built a steam flour mill on the south side of the river below the bridge – taken over in 1856 by Cadge and Colman – the first company to share profits with employees – to give holidays with pay and also pay wages during sickness.
- 1855 Edward Crisp Ltd. wine merchants started.
- 1876 British Braids (Braidex) in Princes Street – started by Luke Turners & Co. making elastic – at the suggestion of the Bishop to provide work for women – the oldest manufacturing firm in Peterborough still active.
- 1880 Brick making in small groups commenced. This eventually led to the establishment of London Brick Company at Fletton in the 1920s.
- 1834 Gabriel, Wade and English set up business on river side near the East station.
- 1854 E.M.A.P. started with the publication of a monthly newspaper.
- 1864 C. Peach and Son established.

### OVER 50 YEARS:

- 1898 J. P. Hall and Sons – Pump specialists.
- 1904 Werner Pfleiderer & Perkins came to Westwood. Later in 1923 their associates – Joseph Baker and Sons of Willesden came up to Peterborough hence Willesden Avenue. Baker Perkins have become world famous for Bakery and Printing machines etc.
- 1904 Horrell's Dairies commenced at Westwood.
- 1907 Peter Brotherhood arrived from London – now well known for synthetic fibre and plastics machinery, high pressure compressors and turbo generators.
- 1911 Adcocks started in Huntley Grove with a brewing of Ginger beer and Dandelion and Burdock delivered by horse dray.
- 1925 Peterborough die casting and Netherton Building Co. established.
- 1926 British Sugar Corporation opened a factory at Woodston including the chief Chemical Laboratories for the whole company.

### OVER 10 YEARS:

- 1932 Frank Perkins – the world famous diesel engine firm – started in the town centre and moved out to Newark in 1946. They became the largest employer in the city.
- 1933 W. Pinder and Sons commenced sheet metal manufacture.
- 1935 Newalls Engineering – now part of the B. Elliott group.
- 1966 British Domestic Appliances (Hotpoint).
- 1968 Freemans mail order company came from London.

Where paths crossed and people exchanged goods the site was marked by a stone – thus Market.

In 1859 it is recorded that the four railway companies (L & N.W. Great Northern, Great Eastern and Midland) brought 9500 people to the Bridge Fair – a tremendous influx when it is remembered the total population was only in the region of 18,000. This indicates a significant influence on trade and prosperity attributable to the railways.

# THE STORY OF PETERBOROUGH

the New Town

## THE EXPANSION OF PETERBOROUGH

### The New Town

Twin objectives in the New Town expansion of Peterborough were: 1 — to help relieve London's housing problems by providing homes and work for people from London and the south-east. 2 — to effect large and rapid improvements in Peterborough for the benefit of present and future Peterborians.



Industrial Expansion

The expansion is being carried out jointly by Peterborough Development Corporation (a Government agency), Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council. The city, which had a population of 81,000 when it was designated a New Town in 1967, is to almost double in size. The expansion is taking place in new townships built west of the old city, in a large-scale expansion of north Peterborough and by in-fill schemes in the established city. The first of the new townships, Bretton (population 17,000) is nearing completion; the second township, Orton (over 20,000), is well advanced; and the expansion of the Paston/Werrington area of north Peterborough (for a further 17,000) is proceeding.

A bonus to arise from Peterborough's massive expansion is the uncovering of archaeological evidence of 6,000 years of the city's history. Much has been learned and much has been preserved.

### Progress

Expansion building work began in 1970. At the end of 1980, the population had increased by 36,000, there were 16,600 extra jobs, nearly 16,000 new homes, over five million square feet of new industrial and commercial property, and 190 new firms had opened in the city.

### Roads

In addition to many secondary and minor roads, 20 miles of Parkway primary roads (mainly dual-carriageway) have been built.

### Community facilities

In the new areas there are community centres, local shopping centres, major new sports and social buildings (invariably used in conjunction with facilities at nearby new schools) and the main township centres contain a wide variety of shops, offices and services. Voluntary and statutory bodies pooled resources to build The Cresset at Bretton. This social centre is unique, providing recreation, religious facilities, exhibitions, restaurants, book and toy libraries, workshops, play areas and flats for young people.



City Centre Development

### Housing

Development Corporation homes range from one-bedroom flats to five-bedroom family houses. They are built in a variety of materials, styles and layouts. Extensive networks of cycleways and footpaths — as well as roads — link the housing areas to one another, to shopping centres, industrial areas,

parks and the older parts of the city. The emphasis is on safe, traffic free areas where children can play close to their home; but in addition purpose built play areas and playing fields have been provided. Corporation homes have central heating by gas or electricity. But Bretton has Britain's most extensive low-rise district heating scheme, providing central heating and domestic hot water for almost 4,000 rented and private houses, shops, offices, schools, factories and community buildings. A wide variety of houses are built for sale by private developers on sites made available by the Corporation and on privately-owned sites.

### Nene Park

The Park stretches six miles along the valley of the River Nene to Wansford on the Great North Road. Facilities on the Embankment in the city centre include the Key Theatre, regional indoor swimming pool, sports pitches, and athletics track. At Thorpe Wood the Development Corporation has created and operates a public golf course (18 holes, par 73). A nature trail is open at Thorpe Wood. At Orton Mere a 12 acre site next to the river has been landscaped to form pleasant open space. At the end of 1980, work was progressing at Orton Meadows on a second 18-hole public golf course.



The Nene Park

The centrepiece of the whole park is Ferry Meadow. 500-acre natural amphitheatre contains lakes for all types of boating as well as areas for picnicking, walking, horse-riding, camping and caravanning, fishing, and studies of archaeology, wildlife and geology.

#### Nene Valley Railway

The Development Corporation bought five miles of disused British Rail track running through Nene Park from Wansford to Orton. This track is now leased to Peterborough Railway Society, who run the Nene Valley Railway – a standard gauge steam passenger service. The railway is unique in Britain for its mix of continental as well as British locomotives.



The Nene Valley Railway

#### Landscaping

Millions of trees and shrubs are being planted during expansion – alongside roads, in housing and industrial areas, in parks and play areas, and in Nene Park. Most of the trees and shrubs come from the Development Corporation's 80-acre nursery at Castor.

#### Archaeology

Peterborough is an area rich in history, in archaeological remains and activity. Careful liaison between the Nene Valley Research Committee, the Development Corporation, the Museum and local councils ensures that important archaeological sites are untouched and that others are examined and recorded before construction begins.

